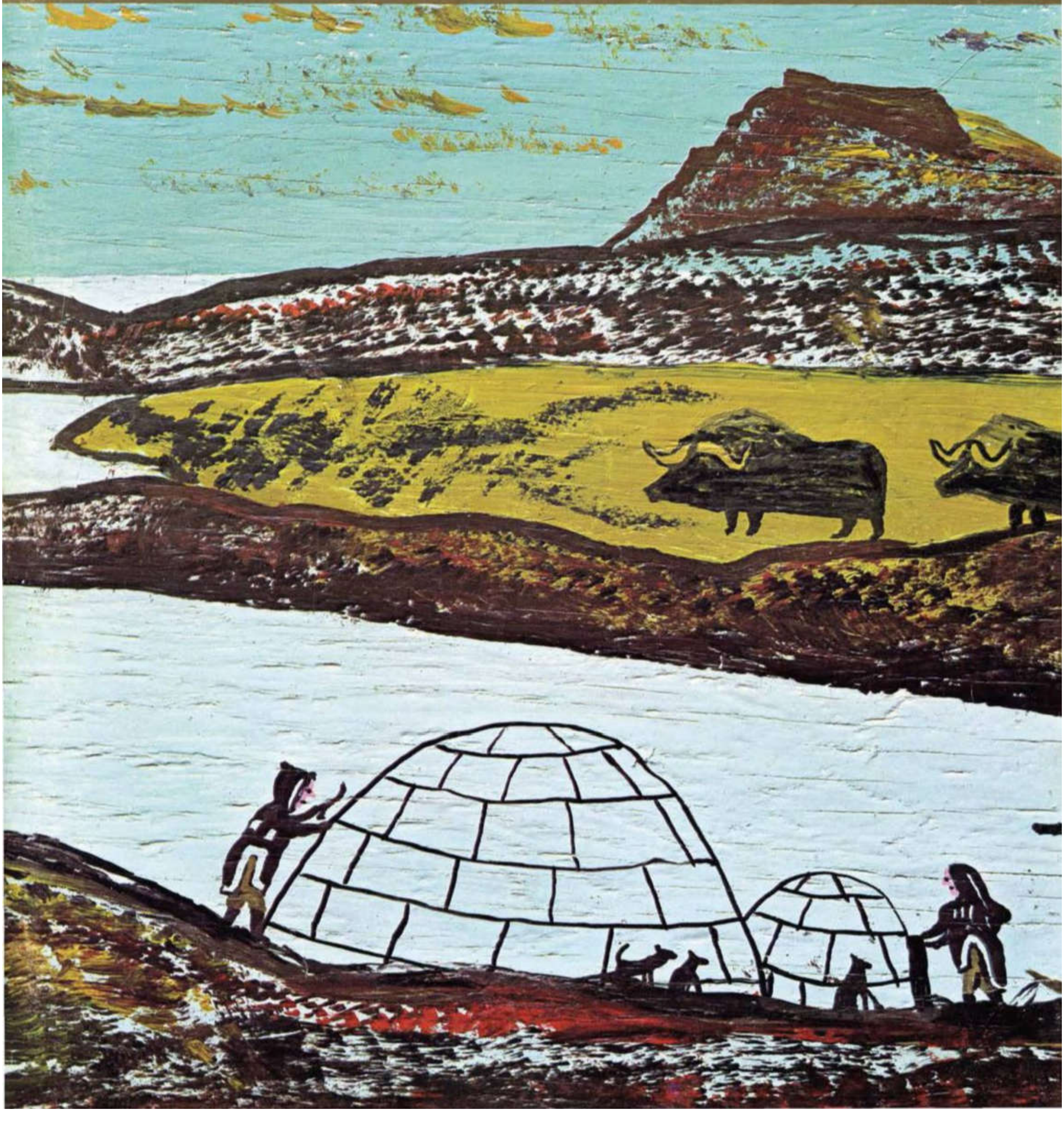
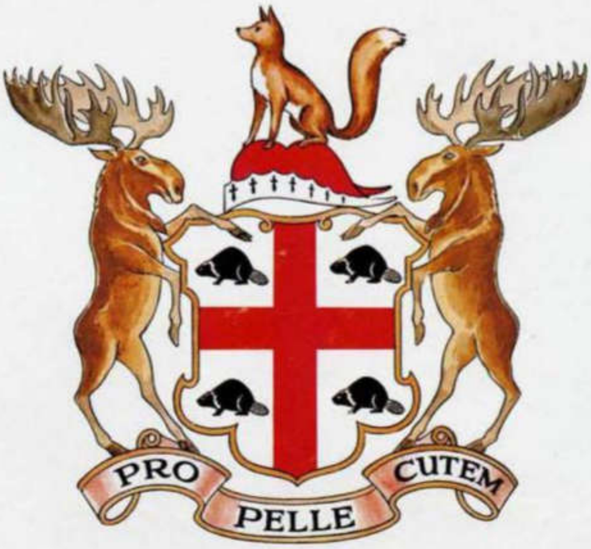
The Beaver





The Hudson's Bay Company, in recognition of the centenary of Canadian Confederation, has produced this special issue of *The Beaver*. In it are brought together for the first time articles by eminent authorities on different aspects of old and new Eskimo art, but not including the prints that have been so successfully created in the Arctic in recent years.

Other Centennial projects sponsored by the Hudson's Bay Company include the western tour of Canada's national folk dance group, Les Feux-Follets; various art exhibitions in Company stores; the building of Olympic House at Expo 67, to be the permanent headquarters of the Canadian Olympic Association; and a major financial contribution to the Manitoba Centennial Centre which will comprise planetarium, theatre, museum, and concert hall, and the art gallery.

The Beaver

MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH

Editor: Malvina Bolus

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ESKIMO ART

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The editor wishes to express sincere thanks for advice and assistance in the production of this publication generously given by the contributors and by officials of the Canadian National Museum, in particular Dr. W. E. Taylor, Director of the Human History Branch, and for the practical help of Professor George Swinton which has been invaluable. At right: Two-inch ivory carving, probably early Dorset culture, from Ivugivik.

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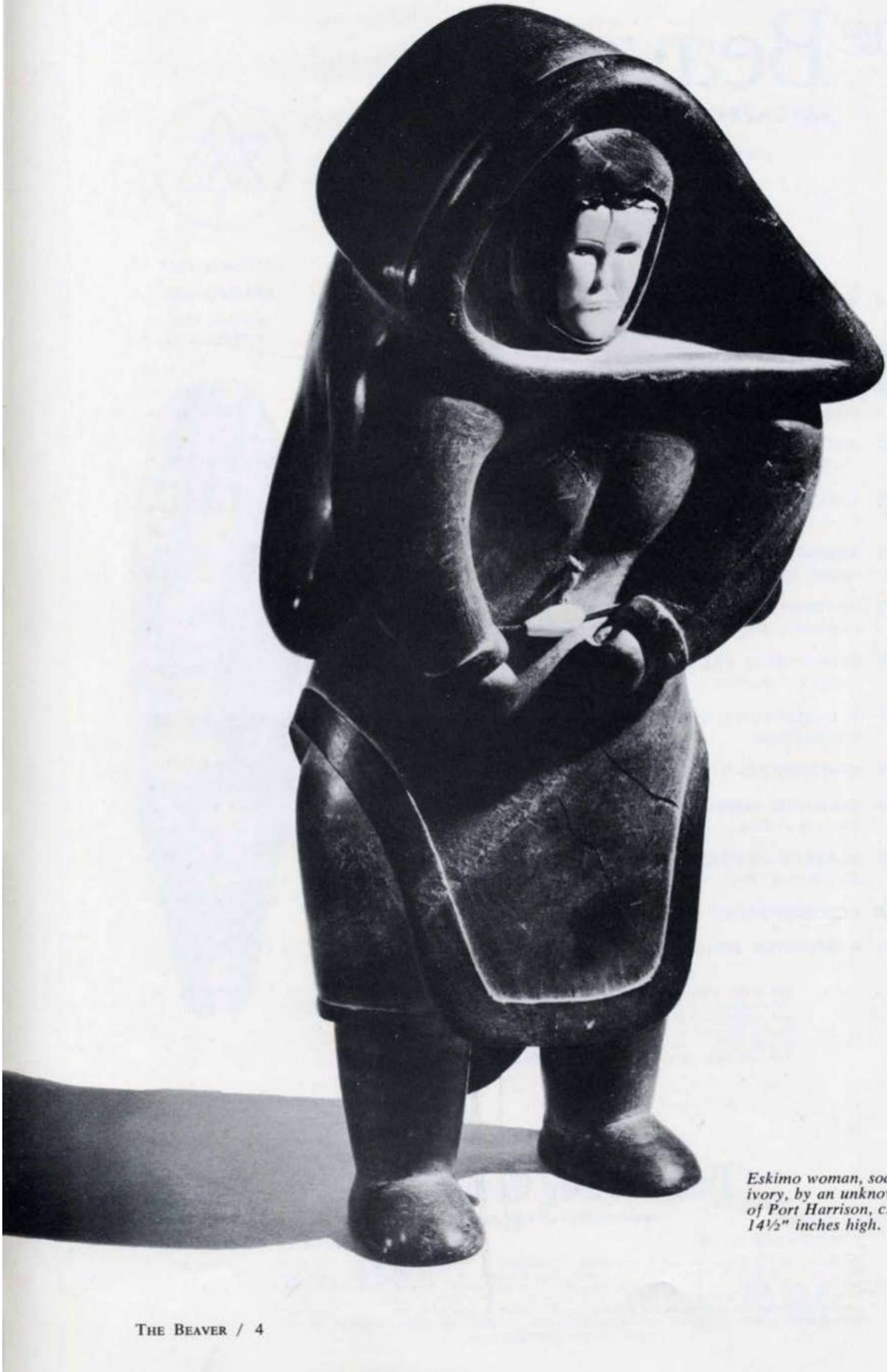
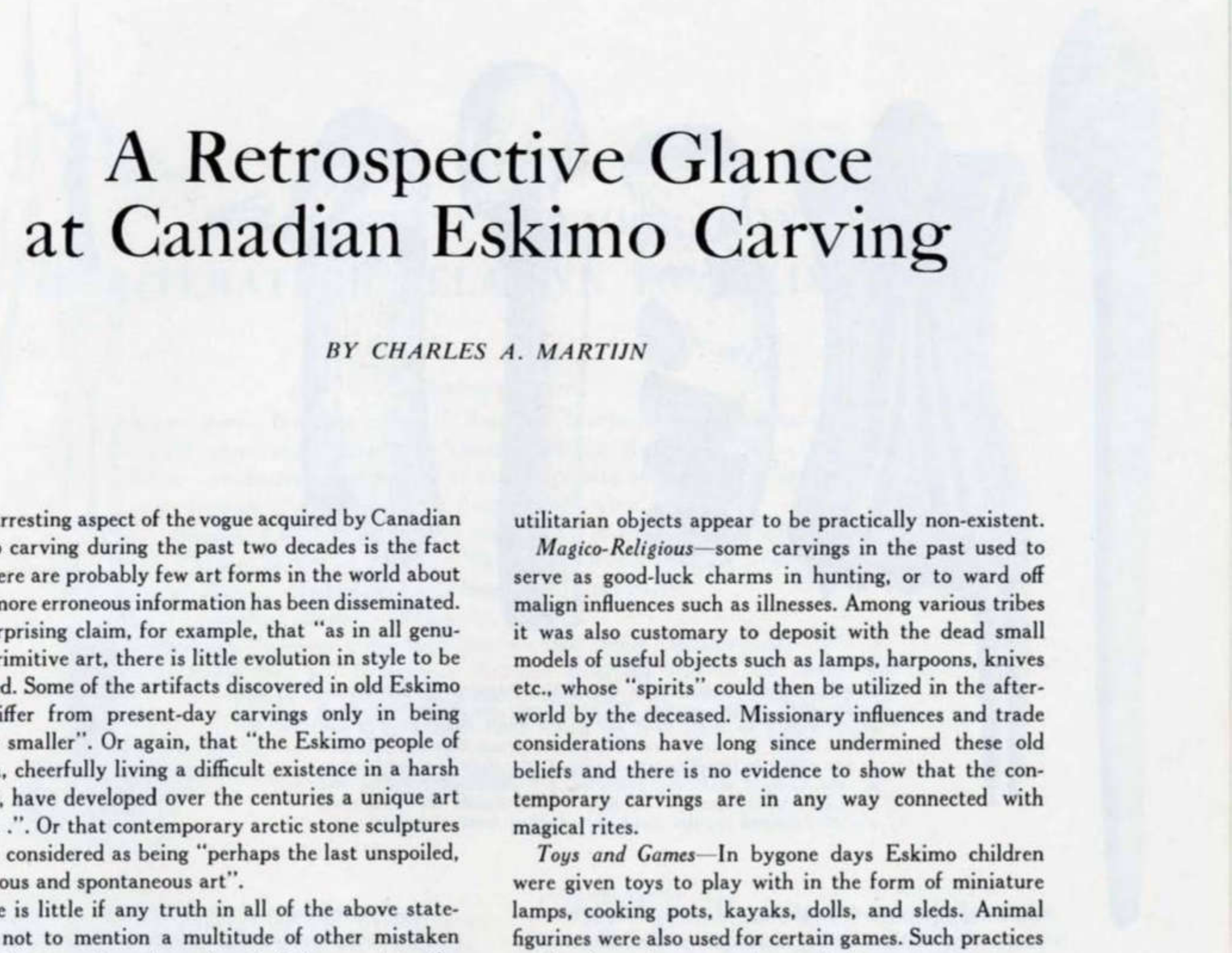


Eskimo woman, soapstone and ivory, by an unknown carver of Port Harrison, c. 1953-4, 14½" inches high.



A Retrospective Glance at Canadian Eskimo Carving

BY CHARLES A. MARTIJN

An arresting aspect of the vogue acquired by Canadian Eskimo carving during the past two decades is the fact that there are probably few art forms in the world about which more erroneous information has been disseminated. The surprising claim, for example, that "as in all genuinely primitive art, there is little evolution in style to be observed. Some of the artifacts discovered in old Eskimo sites differ from present-day carvings only in being slightly smaller". Or again, that "the Eskimo people of Canada, cheerfully living a difficult existence in a harsh climate, have developed over the centuries a unique art form . . .". Or that contemporary arctic stone sculptures may be considered as being "perhaps the last unspoiled, indigenous and spontaneous art".

There is little if any truth in all of the above statements, not to mention a multitude of other mistaken beliefs that somehow have found their way into the literature on the subject. Eskimo art, like the art of any other human society, "primitive" or otherwise, possesses a distinctive history of its own. During the course of the four to five thousand years of recorded Eskimo existence, it has undergone constant transformation and can be subdivided into a series of unique stylistic periods. The figurines fashioned by contemporary Eskimos differ markedly from those made in earlier times. As a matter of fact, the present day items manifestly represent a new art phase which emerged in the late 1940s. The traditional functions of arctic carving, moreover, were quite different from what they are today. So-called "primitive" communities tend to achieve a close integration of art with everyday life. The extensive material culture of the prehistoric Eskimo, and to a lesser degree that of the historical Eskimo, bears this out quite clearly. Four primary categories of function may be attributed to arctic carvings of past centuries.

Decorative—objects for daily use were often ornamented or carved in the form of animals or humans. Nowadays the Eskimo's material possessions are mainly of foreign manufacture, and opportunities for decorating utilitarian objects appear to be practically non-existent.

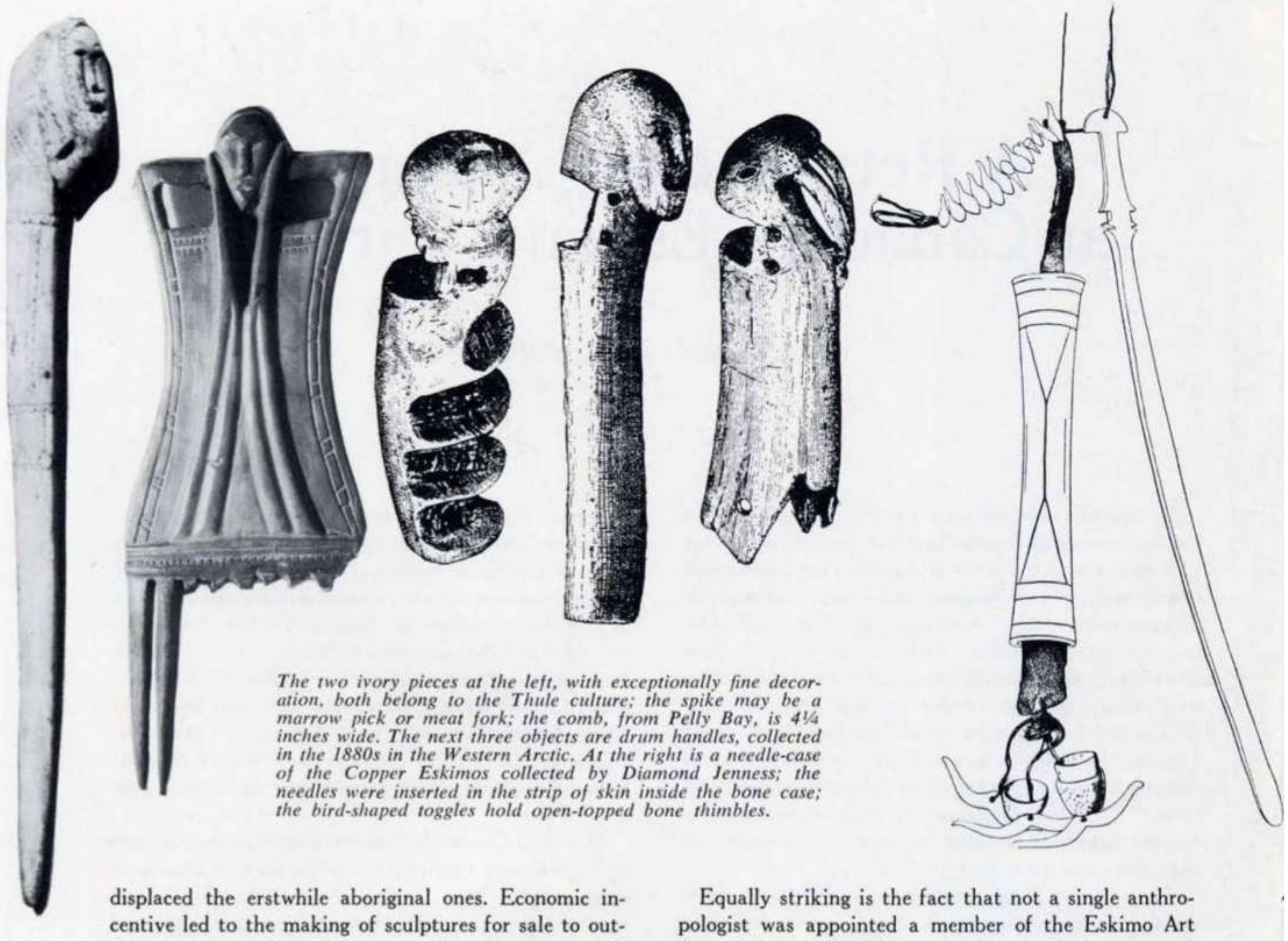
Magico-Religious—some carvings in the past used to serve as good-luck charms in hunting, or to ward off malign influences such as illnesses. Among various tribes it was also customary to deposit with the dead small models of useful objects such as lamps, harpoons, knives etc., whose "spirits" could then be utilized in the afterworld by the deceased. Missionary influences and trade considerations have long since undermined these old beliefs and there is no evidence to show that the contemporary carvings are in any way connected with magical rites.

Toys and Games—In bygone days Eskimo children were given toys to play with in the form of miniature lamps, cooking pots, kayaks, dolls, and sleds. Animal figurines were also used for certain games. Such practices tend to be quite rare today, and often as not toys are obtained from trading-stores.

Self-entertainment — Formerly Eskimos sometimes carved for their own amusement in order to while away idle moments. A spokesman for the Department of Northern Affairs postulated in 1960 that "the best Eskimo carvers are still making a lot of carvings which they happen to like and which they don't much care if anyone buys". This supposition has been contradicted by at least one field-researcher who interviewed more than twenty artists from a certain village in Ungava. With the exception of a seventeen year old boy who had made only three figurines in his life, and didn't mind it, all the others stated that they didn't like, or that they hated, carving. They went ahead at it in the realization that if they wanted extra money this was one of the few methods at hand for earning it. In this sense carving happened to be a necessary occupation, with the result that the majority of them looked on it as a boring and mechanical activity.

The evidence seems indisputable that, once contact had been established between Eskimos and Whites, a fifth function for carving developed which eventually

Charles Martijn, graduate of Loyola College, McGill, University of Toronto M.A. in anthropology, is now completing his doctorate at the University of Wisconsin. His historical study of Eskimo carving was published in 1964 in "Anthropos". Archaeological field work, now centered on Quebec, has taken him to various parts of North America and Europe.

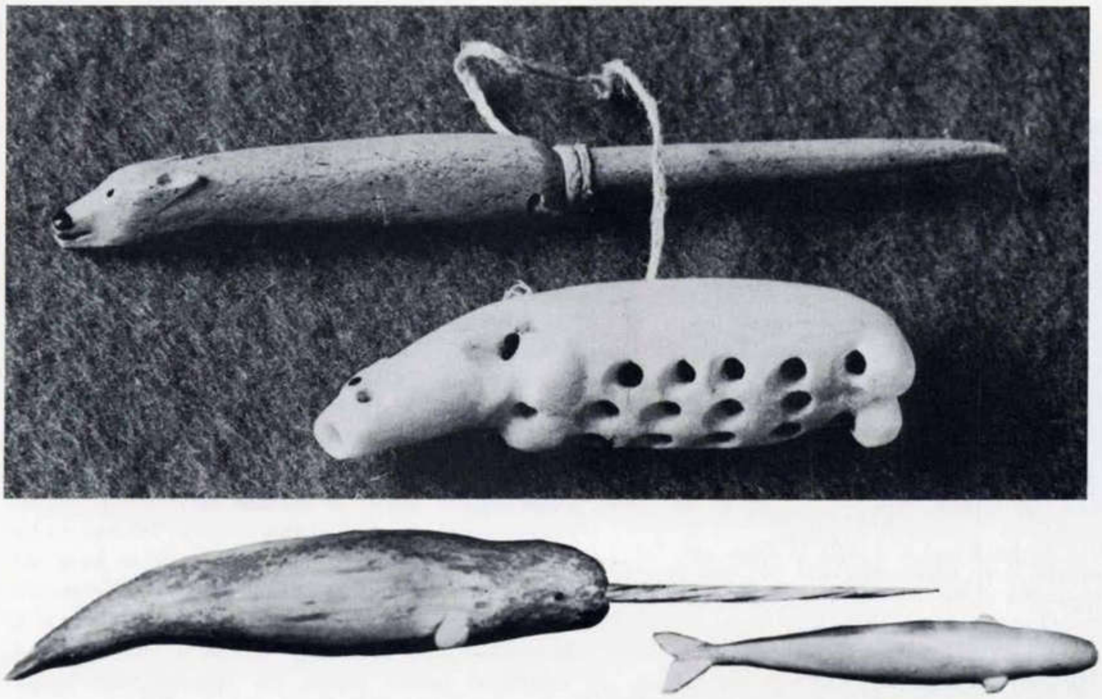


The two ivory pieces at the left, with exceptionally fine decoration, both belong to the Thule culture; the spike may be a marrow pick or meat fork; the comb, from Pelly Bay, is 4¼ inches wide. The next three objects are drum handles, collected in the 1880s in the Western Arctic. At the right is a needle-case of the Copper Eskimos collected by Diamond Jenness; the needles were inserted in the strip of skin inside the bone case; the bird-shaped toggles hold open-topped bone thimbles.

displaced the erstwhile aboriginal ones. Economic incentive led to the making of sculptures for sale to outsiders. As a result, carving ceased to play an integral traditional role in Canadian Eskimo life, and a changeover to a culturally peripheral activity took place.

It is rather astonishing to discover how little collaboration there has been in the study of Eskimo art, until quite recently, between on one hand representatives of Canadian art circles such as museum authorities, artists, art professors and critics, and on the other hand experts from the field of anthropology, specifically ethnologists and archaeologists. One result of this lack of communication has been the unchallenged appearance in print of commentaries on arctic art by writers who, though well intentioned, did not possess a detailed knowledge of Eskimo history, culture, and character. A conspicuous example is the semi-official Government booklet entitled *Canadian Eskimo Art*, originally brought out in 1954 by the Department of Northern Affairs and still currently being reprinted. Although specifically designed to publicize contemporary Canadian Eskimo carving and for that purpose widely distributed across the North American continent and abroad, it makes misleading assertions and contains practically nothing of either historical or anthropological value.

Equally striking is the fact that not a single anthropologist was appointed a member of the Eskimo Art Committee in 1962. This happens to be a body composed of professional artists and museum officials from Ontario and Quebec, charged with passing judgement on the quality of Eskimo prints and carvings submitted to their inspection, and also with giving advice on the marketing of these items. It remains in some ways a puzzle why this task of screening Eskimo art work was placed exclusively in the hands of persons who, whatever their other qualifications may have been, appear to have possessed only a superficial grasp of Eskimo life, values, and customs as became clear on more than one occasion from their published comments. This is not to imply that arctic anthropologists share no part in the blame of failing to provide the general public with a proper perspective on modern Eskimo carving. Seldom did they attempt to set the record straight when well-meaning but ill-informed persons published articles on various aspects of Eskimo carving that bore no resemblance to the facts. Generally speaking, arctic anthropologists have tended to neglect the aesthetic aspect of Eskimo art, past as well as present. Some are hesistant due to a feeling of inadequacy on their part that stems from a lack of training in aesthetics. Others have virtually ignored the modern phase because



Carved pieces for ajaqaq, the cup and ball type of game, from west of Hudson Bay, and ivory narwhal and white whale from Southampton Island and east coast of Labrador respectively.

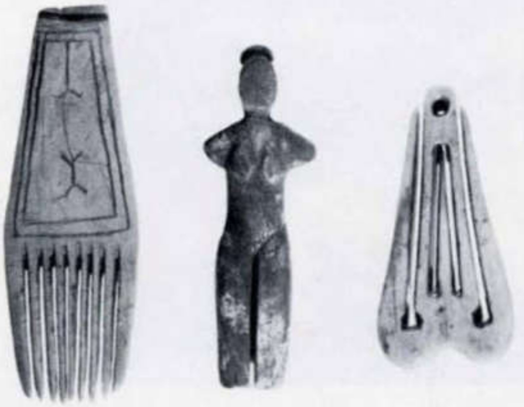
in their short-sighted view it is an art of acculturation which does not form an authentic part of traditional Eskimo existence. More recently, however, qualified art historians and anthropologists have begun to rectify this situation. One outstanding example is George Swinton's 1965 publication, *Eskimo Sculpture—Sculpture Esquimaude*, which hopefully marks the beginning of a new era insofar as Canadian Eskimo art studies are concerned.

PREHISTORIC CANADIAN ESKIMO CARVING

On the basis of what is presently known about arctic prehistory, there appear to have been three ancient Eskimo traditions which preceded the contemporary Eskimo culture in Canada's northland. The term "tradition" is used here to designate a specific way of life led by a group or groups of people, which persisted through time and space, and is recognizable to the archaeologist because of various clues, primarily in the form of characteristic artifacts. Such "traditions" can sometimes be broken up into a series of basically related culture phases which may be a reflection of independent internal change coupled with processes of adjustment in response to new ecological situations, or to contact with other cultures, or both.

Diminutive bear from North Greenland, c. 1900, is standing on a quarter.

The name *Pre-Dorset Tradition* is commonly used to designate the oldest known traces of human occupation in the Canadian arctic. It could more precisely be described as the Canadian manifestation of the Arctic Small Tool tradition which developed in the Bering Strait region around 4,000 B.C. and later spread into northern Canada by 2,500 B.C., and into Greenland by 2,000 B.C. Diagnostic Pre-Dorset implements include burins, microblades and polyhedral cores, as well as a variety of small artifacts with fine pressure-flaking retouch. Whether the makers of these tools were already a true Eskimo population remains an open question since no skeletal remains have as yet been found, and nothing is known about their language. Nevertheless, as Dr. W. E. Taylor, then chief archaeologist at the National Museum of Canada, wrote in *The Beaver* (Spring 1965) "They did, however, have an Eskimo way of life, that is, a distinctive culture and economy adapted to treeless country, and further some of their objects persist in slightly altered form in much later, clearly Eskimo, sites". Thus far only a few Pre-Dorset carvings have been found in Canada, but nothing has as yet been published on them. They come from Igloolik on the Melville Peninsula, and represent animals and naturalistic human faces. In Greenland, two art



Relics of the Thule culture, a comb, a simple doll, and an ivory holder for thimbles of sealskin that formed a cap over the fingertip.

objects of the Sarqaq culture, a late Pre-Dorset variant, have been dated at about 900 B.C. One is a tiny bone spatula on which a face has been engraved. The second item is a piece of bone decorated with a "skeletal" design. The circumpolar distribution of this particular trait reflects an ancient Eurasian origin, and significantly enough, it is a common motif in later Dorset art.

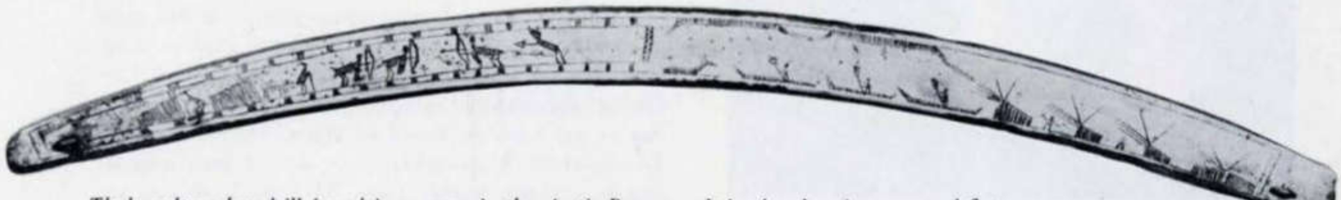
Certain changes had begun to take place in Pre-Dorset culture by about 1,000 B.C. Exactly how and why this process took place is still uncertain, but it appears to have stemmed from the diffusion of various traits and ideas from the Alaskan region, as well as from independent innovation. The result was the emergence by about 800 B.C. of what archaeologists call the *Dorset Tradition.* It is generally believed today that this Dorset Tradition developed *in situ* somewhere in the Canadian arctic as an off-shoot of Pre-Dorset and need not be attributed to a new migratory wave of people invading the northland.

The Dorset culture continued to exist for more than two thousand years, finally coming to an end some time during the 14th century A.D. Art appears to have flourished, particularly during the later stages of the Dorset period. Superb miniature carvings of animals and human beings, often along stylized lines, represent a distinctive aspect of this tradition. They are discussed elsewhere in this issue.

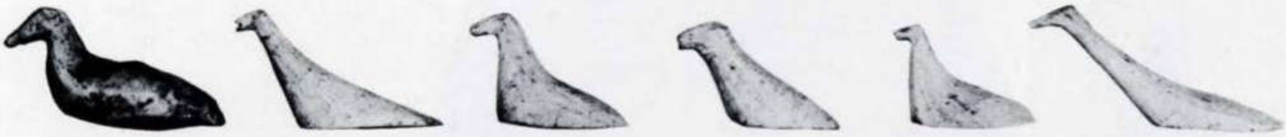
Toward the end of its long life-span the Dorset Tradition began to be supplanted by a different group of Eskimo invaders from Alaska. These newcomers, the so-called Thule people, are thought to have commenced their eastward expansion into the Canadian arctic at about 1,000 A.D., spreading as far as Greenland where the Vikings had by then established settlements, and Labrador. The indigenous Dorset population which they encountered was almost entirely absorbed or annihilated, as glimpsed from the Tunit legends, except perhaps for a few instances of radical acculturation. This has been suggested, for instance, of the Sadlermiut tribe on Southampton Island in Hudson Bay, which became extinct around the turn of this century. Throughout the Canadian northland, Dorset art seems to have disappeared altogether as a distinctive style, leaving scarcely any imprint on the Thule and later phases of historical Eskimo art which replaced it. Only in eastern Greenland today, among the Angmagssalik people, are certain Dorset stylistic traits still to be found.

The Thule culture belonged to what is commonly referred to as the Inuk tradition of Alaska. This northern maritime tradition encompassed a long series of Eskimo culture phases comprising Okvik—Old Bering Sea—Birnirk—Punuk—Thule—Inugsuk (*C.* 500 B.C.-1700 A.D.), which spans a time period of over two thousand years and provides an unbroken record of successive transformations in arctic art styles. Contrary to what might have been expected, the picture that emerges is one of a gradual transition from elaborate early styles such as that of Old Bering Sea, to much more simplified and elementary fashions in sculpture and engraving. The factors underlying this curious trend remain as yet unexplained.

Being an end-product of this process, Thule art, except for occasional displays of imaginative skill, was undistinguished and often rudimentary. Adhering to past practice, the carved objects were primarily of ivory, with a lesser proportion of wood, bone, and antler. Artists availed themselves of simple engraved line motifs, and customarily drilled rows of decorative dots on tiny flat-bottomed birds and other animal effigies. They also fashioned "dolls" with nondescript faces, making stumps serve for arms or even leaving these out altogether.



Thule culture bowdrill found in a grave in the Arctic Bay area. It is of walrus ivory carved flat on two sides and engraved; this side depicts two groups of Eskimos armed with bows attacking each other, and men in kayaks after a caribou; the other side shows whale hunters in umiak.



Tiny flat-bottomed birds such as these ones from east of Hudson Bay have been found from Thule times across the Arctic.

Some of the figurines can be identified as male or female but others lack any sex characteristics. Thule statuettes were depicted either naked or else clad in a single article of attire such as a loincloth, boots, or a hood, while particular attention was paid to the hairstyles of women.

As a result of certain factors, including the onset of harsher climatic conditions and associated ecological changes, the Thule culture in Canada's northland began to decline around the 17th century. Large whales became markedly scarcer, and what had once been fairly extensive Thule whale-hunting communities gradually proceeded to break up into smaller bands and family groups depending more and more on seal and caribou for their subsistence.

During this transitional stage, art forms declined even more perceptibly in number, inspiration, and quality of execution. All in all then, the remnants of carving legacy left by the Thule People to their direct descendants—the Canadian Eskimos of historical times—was much inferior to what had preceded it over a period of more than twenty centuries.

HISTORICAL CANADIAN ESKIMO CARVING

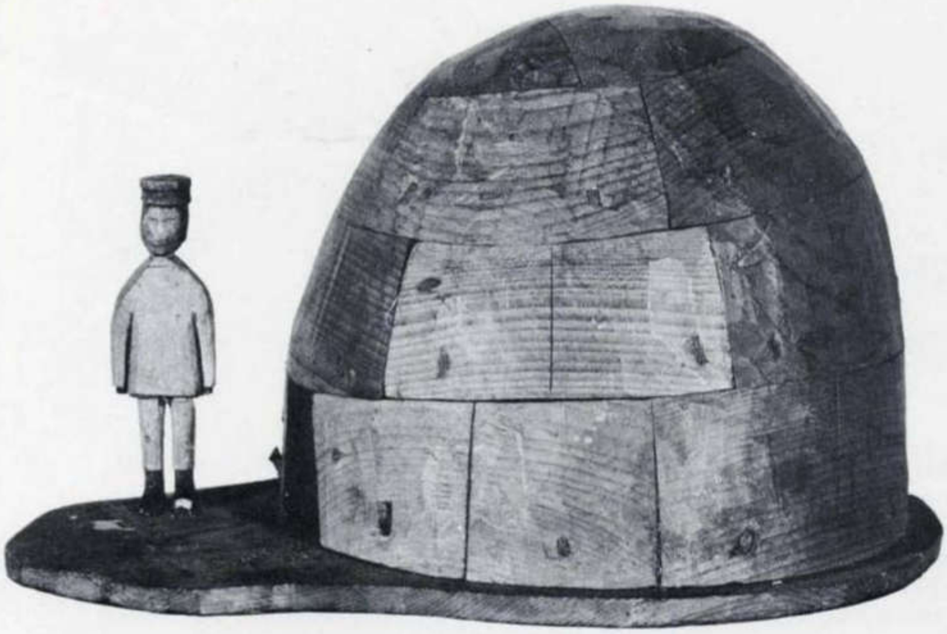
The archaeological evidence presented above negates entirely the claim put forward by some authors that Canadian Eskimos have been perfecting their carving skill for several millennia. On the contrary, by White contact times their art exhibited unmistakable signs of cultural disruption. This receives clearcut confirmation from the comments of early observers in the Canadian North. For example, the western arctic explorer Dr Richard King (1836) obtained merely a few crude carvings of bone from the Back River Eskimos. In the report on his stay with the Copper Eskimos between 1914 and 1918, Diamond Jenness relates that "they did, it is true, engrave a few simple designs, and make a few rough carvings mainly for fishing lines and needle cases; but the "picture-writing" of the Western [Alaskan] Eskimo, and the naturalistic shapes given to toggles, drum handles, and many other objects were conspicuously absent". Similarly, the Danish anthropologist, Therkel Mathiassen, managed to collect only a few ivory and bone miniatures from the Netsilik tribe.

The stagnation of art was particularly noticeable among the bands living along the west coast of Hudson Bay. At an early date, Parry (1824) had already made disparaging references to their lack of ability in this field of endeavour. Mathiassen (1928) likewise remarked that "on the whole the Iglulik Eskimos are not very skillful at carving; there are however exceptions . . . but among the younger men this art is in a state of rapid decline". With regard to the Caribou Eskimos, Kaj Birket-Smith (1929) asserted that "carving and engraving of ornaments are unimportant in the extreme. From these Eskimos I do not know one example of free sculpture or of the forms of an implement having been influenced by ornamental consideration, with the exception of a narrow spoon".

Of course, conditions everywhere had not reached that same state of regression. The noted anthropologist, Franz Boas, recorded in 1901 that the "Aivilik and Kinipetu of Southampton Island make a great many carvings in ivory and soapstone". He summed up by stating that, "in the description of the material I have tried to show that the forms found in each particular region are very stable, and that the artistic value of the old work made before white contact is considerably greater than that of the recent work of the natives in this region [West Hudson Bay]". Many members of the Aivilik tribe were employed by whalers in those days, and one may speculate as to whether the purchase of keepsakes by the latter had led to a temporary increase in the production of carvings. At any rate, later on in the 1920s Birket-Smith found carving to be a rare though not unknown activity among the Aivilik.

At Cumberland Sound on Baffin Island, Boas was also shown a number of realistic figurines which he considered to be on a par with those from other eastern tribes. On the other hand, Frank Speck, after examining in the 1920s a collection from Pond Inlet farther north, concluded that "the animal and human figures carved in ivory shows a crudeness in comparison with similar products of the fine arts from the Eskimo of the Alaskan and especially of the Labrador regions".

Concerning the Ungava Eskimos of Quebec, the ethnologist Lucien Turner judged that "art is slightly developed among these people. Their weapons and other



Wooden carving of man and snow-house by an Eskimo of the Labrador peninsula, collected in 1914 by Hawkes.

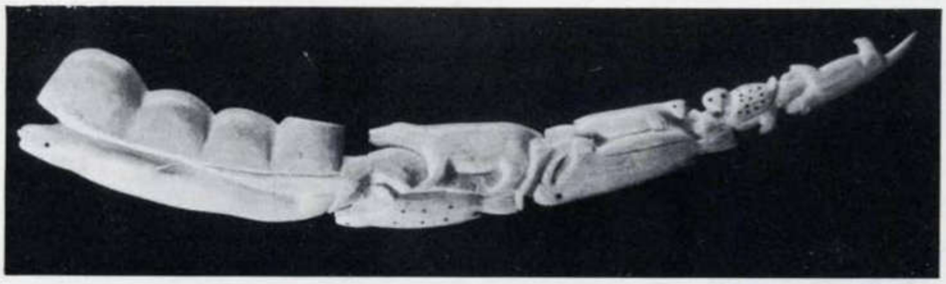
implements are never adorned with carvings of animals and other natural objects or with conventional patterns . . .". He did, however, become the owner of "several small ivory carvings which possess considerable artistic merit. These carvings are fashioned from the tusks of walruses or the teeth of various mammals, and are simply tests of the skill of the worker, who prepares them as toys for children."

Labrador Eskimo art at one time enjoyed a high reputation. E. W. Hawkes remarked in 1916 that "in the form and finish of their ivory carving, [they] excel the other eastern tribes and more nearly approach the ambitious work of the Alaskan Eskimo. Perhaps this is due, as in Alaska, to the introduction of better material for tools, as a result of early contact with the whites". Such contact along the coast had been continuous from the 16th century onward. By 1915, scarcity of walrus tusks and low prices in the curio market caused the art of carving to disappear in this region. Ironically enough, these once so warmly praised Labrador Eskimos appear for some reason to have been completely ignored by those instrumental in fostering the contemporary Canadian Eskimo carving development. It is only since the success of art ventures within the Hudson Bay area that, on a modest scale, new interest has been stirred up in Labrador by local missionaries.

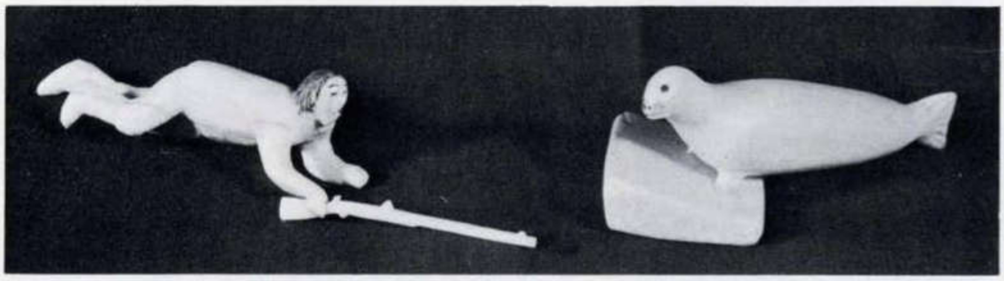
With certain exceptions then, the first explorers, travellers, and anthropologists to write accounts of Canadian Eskimo tribes appear to have been unimpressed by their artistic accomplishments. In fact, to quote Diamond Jenness, "carving in ivory had died out in many districts before the opening of this century".

Certain writers have placed much emphasis on the "geographical remoteness" of the Canadian Eskimo, which supposedly preserved his art from outside influences. Upon closer examination this argument turns out to be fallacious. Eskimo-White contact, though not necessarily continuous, did take place regularly in the Far North throughout the 19th century. Provision ships of the Hudson's Bay Company plied steady routes. Each year whaling vessels, mainly Scottish and American, went to Baffin Land and Hudson Bay in pursuit of their cetacean prey. Apart from bartering with the Eskimos, some of these sailing crews wintered up there, and frequently hired natives as extra help in their operations. Exploring parties moreover kept on returning in search of the Northwest Passage, while traders, travellers, government officials, and missionaries followed in their wake.

Odd though it may sound at first, carving was one of the aspects of Eskimo culture which turned out to be most sensitive and receptive to White influence. The reason for this is simple. Carvings came to be in demand as souvenirs, and this brought with it a gradual transformation in their form and function. Canadian Eskimos began to look on them primarily as commodities for the



Carved walrus tusk from Fort Chimo, c. 1930, Ungava or Labrador Eskimo.



Hunter (probably Labrador Eskimo) and seal, in ivory, collected in northern Hudson Bay area 1903-4.

"tourist trade": The astute observation of Dorothy MacPherson sums it up quite well, "around the posts, objects conforming to the ideas of what outsiders believed to be typical of Eskimo life were most salable and so were most often made". For instance, apart from being fashioned to stand upright, and carved fully dressed (which may be partially the result of missionary influence) so as to give them a typical Eskimo appearance, these statuettes of the contact period assumed increasingly less stiff poses.

Throughout the whole 19th century there was a steady demand for souvenir carvings in the Eastern Arctic. As early as 1812, while stopping at Upper Savage Island in the Hudson Strait, Thomas M'Keevor watched how the natives ". . . no sooner got alongside than they began to traffic. [Included among] the articles which they offered for sale were . . . toys of various kinds, as models of their canoes . . .". During his stay up north in the early 1800s, Captain Lyon bartered for carvings at Repulse Bay, Salisbury Island, and also at the Savage Islands where he recorded that ". . . from the children were procured small toys and models, their parents directing them in their bargains and begging also". Another voyager, J. B. Nevins, recalled in 1847 how "we expected to see some of the Esquimaux in sailing up the [Hudson] Strait, as they generally come from some of the islands on the north coast. For several days before we saw them, we were busy making preparations for what the sailors call the "Huskie (i.e. Eskimo) trade", and speculating upon what we were likely to get from them. . . . They had brought a considerable quantity of ivory and whalebone, and this was the most valuable part of the trade, but what interested me most were some little models of their canoes which were lying on top of those they were in. . . . There were two (women) in particular with whom I carried on a brisk trade. They had brought a number of little figures carved in bone or ivory, and representing the different kinds of animals and birds which are met with in the Straits . . .".

During the 1920s Speck described in detail a number of remarkable walrus tusks from Labrador and northeast Hudson Bay. These items were unusual in that they had been carved as complete units, with up to a dozen animal and human figurines extended in a group along their length. He affirms that "no other specimens quite like them seem to exist in the Eskimo collections of other museums. Coming from the northern Labrador coast they seem to stand out either as a local development in the historical growth of Eskimo art or as the exclusive property of a division of the race which has long had the style among its property though unobserved by students of the Eskimo". There does not seem to be any stylistic connection between those carved tusks and "multiple mask" finds from the Dorset era. We now know that during the early decades of the 20th century a strikingly similar development was taking place in Alaska as a result of Euro-American stimulus. In view of this there can be little doubt that the inspirational source behind the above-mentioned Labrador art form happened to be whalers who introduced the natives to scrimshaw.

By the 1930s, supplying carvings to outsiders whenever the opportunity arose had become a commonplace occupation in certain Canadian Eskimo communities. For a while the Hudson's Bay Company handled a considerable quantity of ivory sculptures and even shipped out a number of commissioned orders, but this practice ended during the great depression.

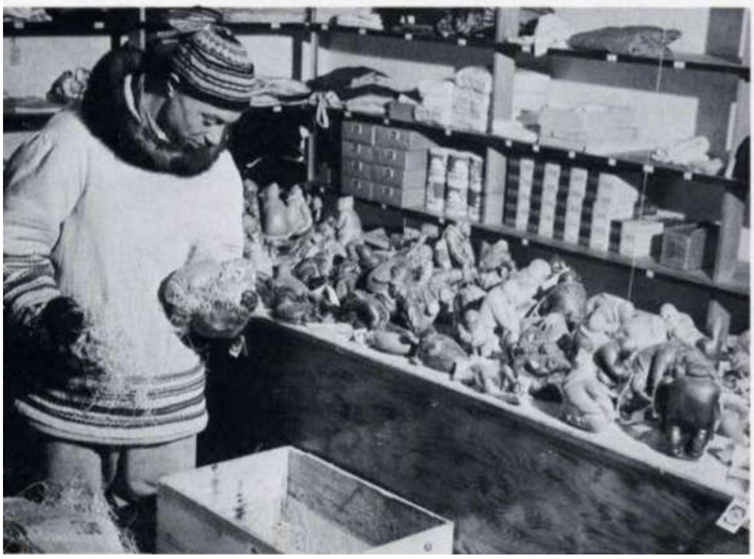
In 1938 Arthur Twomey observed with interest how Belcher Island natives busies themselves "feverishly" at their task of turning out ivory carvings for sale to the crew of a visiting schooner. Apparently the commercial function of carving had not yet overridden all other considerations, for he hazarded the opinion that during the long winter months ahead the unsold items would become toys for the Eskimo children. In contrast to what is produced today, such carvings then were reckoned much less valuable and lacked a year-round market. Many months might pass between ship visits, and no one was too concerned about what happened to their surplus carvings in between those dates. There would always be plenty of time to make some more for the next Kabloona arrivals.

A decade later this easy-going attitude was destined to change drastically at the less isolated communities. Not only had contacts become more frequent but carvings now could be sold directly to the trading-post at any

James Houston displays carvings and basketry to Eskimo audience at Pangnirtung, 1951.

time. With such a favourable set-up, Eskimos became noticeably less negligent about the disposal of their output. The impact of these new developments may be gauged from Leechman's disclosure that "before World War II, when the R.M.S. *Nascopie* took tourists into the Eastern Arctic each summer, there was some sporadic trade in carvings, model kayaks, and dolls, but this was never an important source of revenue. Now that there is an immediate and guaranteed market for such work, production has increased and nearly everybody, it seems, is busy carving, more than 75 per cent of the people according to one estimate".

From all the evidence cited above, it becomes quite clear that historical Canadian Eskimo carving was never the "hitherto undiscovered" and "free from any outside influence" art which certain present day writers have mistakenly believed it to be.



Togosilak packs carvings for shipment in the H B C store at Povungnituk, 1959.

CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN ESKIMO CARVING

The prelude to what may be termed the contemporary Canadian Eskimo carving phase took place in 1948. During the course of that year James Houston, artist and lecturer, went on a painting and sketching excursion to the east coast of Hudson Bay. There he obtained a few small carvings made locally by the Eskimos. Upon his return to Montreal he showed these to members of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild and discussed with them the possibility of introducing this Eskimo art on a wider scale to a discriminating public. The Guild commissioned Houston to return to the Arctic with a grant of money in order to make a test purchase of carvings. The following year one thousand of these were put up for sale in Montreal. Public reaction was enthusiastic and within three days everything had been sold out.

Government officials from the Department of Resources and Development (later renamed Northern Affairs and Natural Resources, and now Indian Affairs and Northern Development) were also induced to take an active interest in the matter. They envisaged the building up of a carving industry whereby the Eskimo's complete dependence on the uncertain fox-fur market might be lessened, and his economy supplemented by a new source of income. The Hudson's Bay Company agreed to this plan, and its representatives at Povungnetuk and Port Harrison spurred on the new development by instituting a purchase program. This enabled Eskimos to exchange carvings at the posts for credit chits, a scheme which was later extended to other trading centres as well. Backed by a government subvention, Houston proceeded to visit settlements in Baffin Island and along both sides of the Hudson Bay in order to organize carving projects in co-operation with the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild. These two organizations were to look after the marketing aspect in Canada and elsewhere. By 1953 most of the necessary organization had been completed.

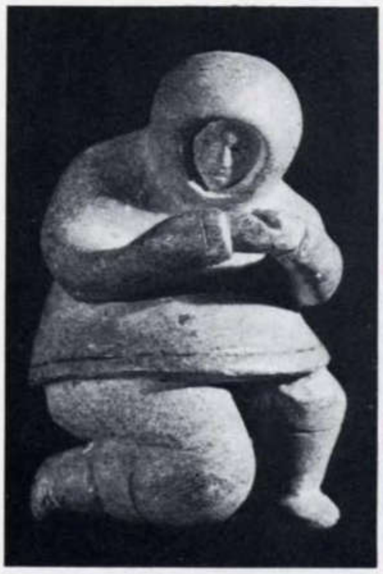
It was during the course of these years—1949-53—that a distinct new form of Eskimo carving evolved in the Canadian Arctic. What exactly happened to bring about this development is to some extent still obscure. It remains possible, however, to recapitulate certain significant events which from all appearances had an acute bearing on the emergence of modern Canadian Eskimo carving as a discrete, unprecedented art style.

From the very outset, those in charge of the carving project stressed not only the reputedly "untainted' nature of this supposed "primitive" art, but also their fervent desire to keep it so. Houston indicated in 1954 that the Canadian Handicrafts Guild was "well aware of the many pitfalls in dealing with a primitive art", and reiterated that for the Eskimo "his art will remain strong only as long as it has real significance to him". Another expositor revealed that "it is the unswerving intention of every individual and every agency involved that though the geographic remoteness which made 'civilization' bypass the region is lessened, 'civilization' will not destroy this art which reflects the individuality, dignity, and extraordinary talent of the people who made it". By that time, nonetheless, radical influences emanating from quite unexpected quarters had already effected astonishing transformations in Canadian Eskimo carving.

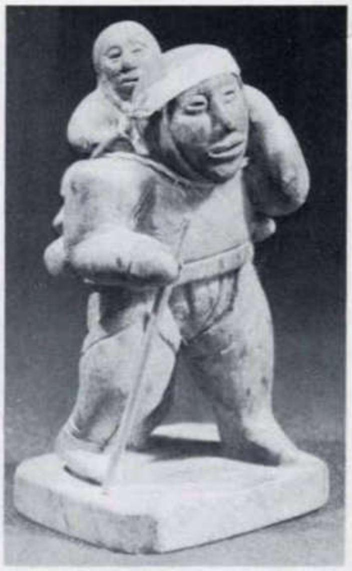
What was the nature of these influences? The 1948 mandate received by Houston from the Canadian Handicrafts Guild provides a ready clue. Once back in the Arctic, they wanted him to find out whether the Eskimos "could produce carvings in quantity and of a quality that would be saleable . . .". In short, the carvings would have to appeal to the tastes of Western purchasers whose approach to and appreciation of art does not necessarily coincide with that of the "primitive" maker. One qualified observer, Douglas Leechman, conceded that the Eskimo "is being encouraged to use better materials and to work as skilfully as he can. This is not done by direct suggestion, but by the more subtle and more effective method of paying more for the best work. The Eskimo is quick to learn . . . Hudson's Bay post managers, who have been coached on values, buy the carvings direct from the Eskimos".

Leechman's use of the term "best work" is revealing for it heralds a subjective approach to Eskimo art. The latter was to be judged solely by Western standards. Not Eskimo, but Euro-Canadian canons would determine what was good or bad—a crucial point indeed! Small wonder that under such "subtle" economic pressure the Eskimo carver began to introduce an even greater number of "alien" concepts into his art. In this way his work became more and more tailored to the tastes of southern Canadian buyers.

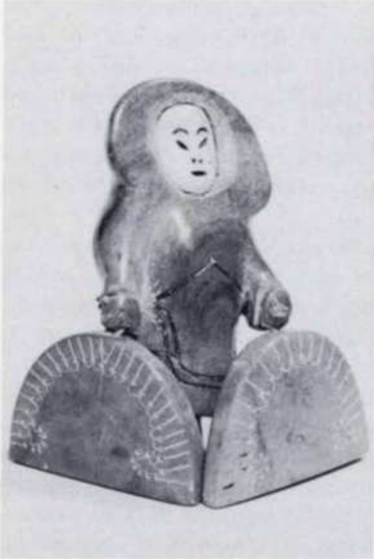
The Canadian Government's interest in Eskimo handicrafts, understandably so, hinged to a large extent on practical considerations. A candid appraisal was offered by R. Gordon Robertson (1960), then deputy minister of Northern Affairs. "Everyone realizes that the weak link in the organization of the industry is likely to be the original purchaser of the art. The wonder is that traders in remote locations have been able to do such a good job in the circumstances. While they are given as much guidance as possible, they still have an extraordinarily difficult task. Judgment on prices is almost the easiest part. The trader knows in general the kind of pieces that are enjoying the strongest market. His price structure



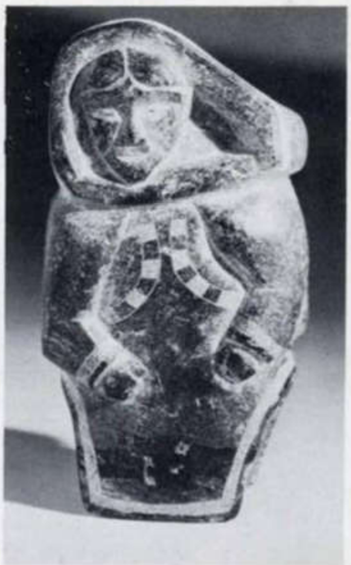
Povungnituk, 1952-3. ↕ *4".*



Pelly Bay(?), early 1950s. ↕ *3¾".*



Sugluk, 1953-4. ↕ *5¼".*



Cape Dorset, 1956-7. ↕ *7¾".*

must reflect those facts of life but he must also remain guiltless of the charge that he tells the Eskimo what to carve. This is, of course, a hopeless dilemna. The romantics who say that Eskimos must stare at the sky and create only what the spirits tell them with no references to commercial influences are just being unrealistic—and the Eskimo is a realist".

What in effect took place up north becomes somewhat more apparent now. A fairly routine occupation involving the manufacture of souvenirs was taken in hand and refurbished with aesthetic concepts and standards of artistic workmanship compatible to Western tastes. Posters, movies, and illustrated guide-manuals containing suggestions on what to carve, were used to promote this campaign. The resultant output in turn was widely publicized as "primitive" art and rigorously guarded against any exploitative practises that could have reduced it to a slick, repetitive, trinket industry. The results were not slow in forthcoming, and by 1951 Houston was already able to report "the quality of the pieces greatly improved". Whatever one's feelings might be about these measures, it is nevertheless to the credit of those who administered the carving project that the standards which they brought to this new Eskimo art phase were high ones.

Without question, no single person has done more to develop and publicize modern Canadian Eskimo carving than James Houston. With persistence and patience, even in the face of some opposition and disinterest by government officials at the beginning, he carried out successfully not only the carving project, but also introduced graphic art at Cape Dorset and encouraged other handicrafts in the Eastern Arctic. His tenacious efforts served to open up new economic vistas for the Canadian Eskimos, thereby enabling them to improve their standard of living at a number of settlements. Houston may even be credited with indirectly creating, at a critical time, a situation favourable for the emergence of Eskimo co-operatives.

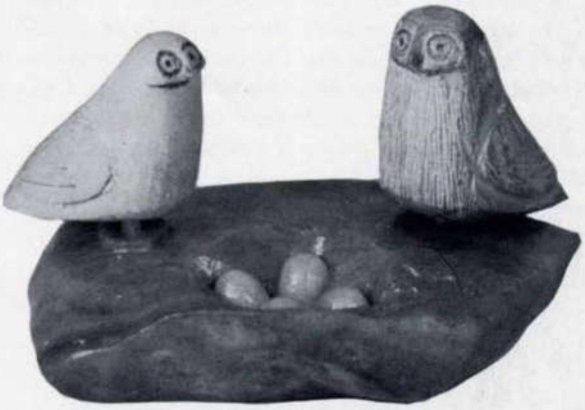
The role played by Houston in the genesis of contemporary Canadian Eskimo carving is a complex and controversial one. His earliest writings reveal only a sketchy knowledge of Eskimo culture and history. As an artist in his own right, and having been imbued at art school with all the values and ideas peculiar to Western art tradition, he could not help but interpret Eskimo carvings wholly on the basis of what his training had taught him. Almost unconsciously, Houston ended by imposing his Euro-Canadian art concepts on the acquiescent Eskimo carvers who benefited from his hints and advice by making their handiwork as acceptable as possible to southern buyers. From a pseudo-traditional activity, already much influenced by White contact, he and they created a splendid new art of acculturation. By disseminating information about the preferences of Western clients, Houston and other project advisers helped to form what the Danish archaeologist, Jørgen Meldgaard, has called a free art with a fresh purpose and a different social position. While having to adhere to higher standards of workmanship, the Eskimo carver is now able to indulge in a wider range of expression, and this blending of indigenous and "civilized" concepts has brought about a genuinely creative achievement in many instances.

The question can now be raised, in what respects do traditional and contemporary Canadian Eskimo carvings differ? Size, for one thing. Whereas traditional figurines were invariably small, large carvings are quite common today, sometimes weighing two to three hundred pounds and attaining several feet in height. Such heavy, bulky objects were never produced in the past because people who have to undertake seasonal migrations avoid unnecessary burdens as much as possible.

One commentator has drawn a comparison between the increase in size of the modern Eskimo carvings with that of West Coast Indian totem poles during the late 19th century. This analogy does not really hold true. Totem pole size was intimately connected with native social prestige, whereas Eskimo carvings unquestionably have become larger only in response to outside demand. In both instances better tools provided the means, but the underlying stimuli differed.

The fact that ivory was the favourite medium of both traditional and historical carvers has been repeatedly

Base 4¼".



Soapstone and antler, by Harry of Povungnituk, 1966, ↕ 10".

stressed in this paper. Less frequently used by them were bone, antler, wood, and horn. It has been claimed on various occasions that the Eskimo consistently made stone carvings down through the ages. Indeed, if we are to believe Houston, "the Eskimos had few materials with which to create works of art. In consequence, they turned to the stones of their land, from which they were compelled to fashion their tools, as a medium for artistic expression. Out of the lifeless rocks they wrested imaginative and lively forms, depicting not only human beings and animals but also imagined creatures seen only in their dreams. Even today, after more than a century of exposure to European culture, this primitive art persists, original, creative, and virile".

Archaeological investigations carried on in the Arctic over a period of several decades have failed to furnish any conclusive evidence in support of such assertions. It is true that incised slate pebbles and sculptured stone lamps of igneous rock are known from the Aleutian Islands and Alaska. On the other hand, finds of prehistoric Eskimo carvings actually made out of soapstone are exceedingly rare. Thus far only a single specimen is known from the Canadian Arctic, a miniature "human mask" dug up at Igloolik on Melville Peninsula. It dates back to somewhere between 500 and 1300 A.D. or Dorset times, and was fashioned from a fragment of a broken oil lamp (p. 44). Myths, once established, are difficult to eradicate. The one about prehistoric Canadian Eskimos having practiced a predominantly soapstone carving art will doubtlessly continue to live on.

L to R: Port Harrison, c. 1954; Belcher Islands, 1951; Pelly Bay, 1965.

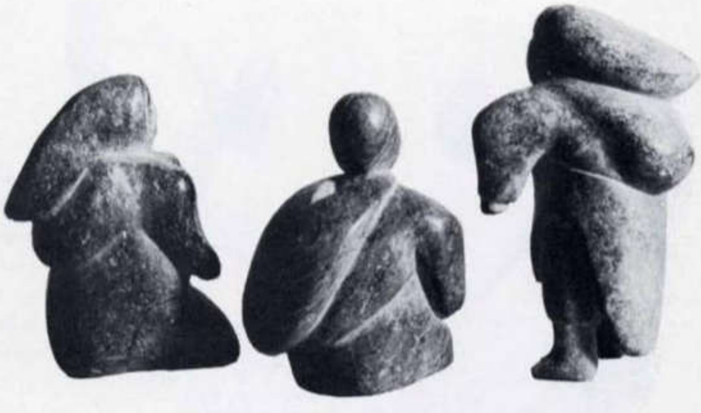
↕ 5¼".

Even throughout most of the historical period figurines and models of soapstone, except for toy pots and lamps, were decidedly in the minority. In the past, only for lamps and pots was soapstone regularly quarried and even traded to regions which lacked it. Why did the traditional Eskimo, when carving, choose to work with ivory, bone, antler, wood or horn, rather than with steatite? No ready answer can be provided. Although the fragility of soapstone vessels necessitated frequent replacement, they only constituted a small part of Eskimo material culture. For this reason opportunities to work with steatite were more limited than was the case with other material. Ivory, bone, etc. were constantly taken in hand to fashion everyday articles much in demand, and which might be more apt to get lost, broken, or worn out. For carving purposes the Eskimo delighted in working with utilitarian objects that already suggested an animal or human form. The shape and size of lamps and pots did not ordinarily lend themselves to sculpture of this nature, as opposed to the smaller artifacts. It ought to be strongly emphasized then that a distinctive characteristic of contemporary Canadian Eskimo carving is the adaptation of soapstone as the preferred medium. This is really the culmination of a trend which due to a variety of reasons had already commenced in historical times.

Physical properties of ivory such as size, thickness, and curvature impose certain restrictions on the carver. What is more, the supply available during any given period is limited, and may vary from year to year. Soapstone on the other hand can be obtained in large or small pieces, just as desired. Nowadays the Canadian Government even sends shipments of it to those arctic settlements where none is available. Another point that should not be overlooked is the fact that "monumental" ivory carvings are an impossibility, whereas steatite sculptures can be made as large as demand requires. A consideration of these obvious advantages attached to the use of soapstone will render it easy to understand why the modern Canadian Eskimo carver has switched over so readily to this medium.

Carving in wood has been quietly discouraged by those who administer the handicrafts project. According to one of the carving guide manuals, "the Eskimo should be encouraged to use only the materials native to his land . . . . The introduction of wood . . . into his art destroys the true Eskimo quality and places him in competition with craftsmen elsewhere who have a complete mastery of the material". As a clincher, one representative of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild has stated flatly that "the Eskimos in the Canadian Arctic do not have any wood to work with at all, as they are above the tree line".

Serpentine, by Simon E9-1704 of Port Harrison, 1958. ↕ 5¾".



Three women, the work of three different carvers of Repulse Bay, 1960, l. to r. Nadsugak E3-518, Ullikatar E3-356, Akkuardjuk E3-578 the standing figure, 5¼".

The explanations given are rather surprising in view of the fact that wood was commonly used for carvings both by prehistoric and historical Eskimos of Canada's northland. In fact, John Davis, the first explorer to mention Eskimo sculptures from the Canadian arctic, found at Cumberland Gulf in 1585 "... many small trifles, as a canoe made of wood, a piece of wood made like an image ... many images cut in wood". Driftwood may not be equally plentiful throughout the arctic, but it is just as much a part of this environment as are, for example, migrating geese. One reason why wood carvings are frowned upon today may be that the available material is usually not of a quality judged to be in keeping with the high *objet d'art* standards of appearance demanded from Eskimo handicraft by southern outlets and customers.

As far as past and present differences in motif are concerned, a large percentage of contemporary sculptures depict either outdoor hunting or domestic scenes from Eskimo life. All these tableaux are a modern innovation designed to give a vivid portrayal of Eskimo existence to outsiders. Such episodes were seldom, if ever, the theme of traditional carvings which moved on altogether different levels of meaning and communication. Multiple associations portraying interaction between people, animals, or people and animals, with some notable exceptions, were never very numerous in the past. For the most part traditional Eskimo artists limited themselves to the static treatment of single subjects.

It has been suggested by Edmund Carpenter, anthropologist and writer on Eskimo art, that the traditional carver did not preoccupy himself with the task of placing a carving in a deliberate setting, or associating it with an explicit mood. For this reason, "each carving lives in spatial independence. Size and shape, proportions and selection, these are set by the object itself, not forced from without. Like sound, each carving creates its own space, its own identity; it imposes its own assumptions".

Interpreted in this light, most traditional carvings reflect such an Eskimo concept of space-time by the very fact that they do not represent specific episodes or static "moments in time". Small and easily handled, they lack a single, favoured side for viewing, and can readily be turned this way and that way for multiple perspectives. This is in sharp contrast to so many contemporary soapstone carvings which portray a "moment of time" from domestic or outdoor life (man-spearing-seal, woman-feeding-child and such), are best viewed from a specific angle, and have been made stationary by being mounted on a pedestal and by increased size and weight. This contemporary carving style fits in harmoniously with our classic occidental approach to art, but is foreign to the old traditions of the north. The ancient Eskimos lacked such artistic "refinements" because these did not fulfill any need in their way of life. Only later on were they taught to think regularly in terms of separating time from space where carving was concerned.

The organization of carving projects by Houston and others brought with it insistent demands for technical perfection, which led in turn to greater self-consciousness about minute detail and complex form. Under pressure to produce work of a certain standard, a new type of artist has come to the fore, in some respects less free to express himself without inhibitions, in other respects able to explore new avenues.

Man used to be depicted quite independent of his surroundings, freed from association with a single location or a specific temporal event. The very opposite is often true today. Canadian Eskimo carvings have become

Legendary figure, woman and sea creature, 1962.

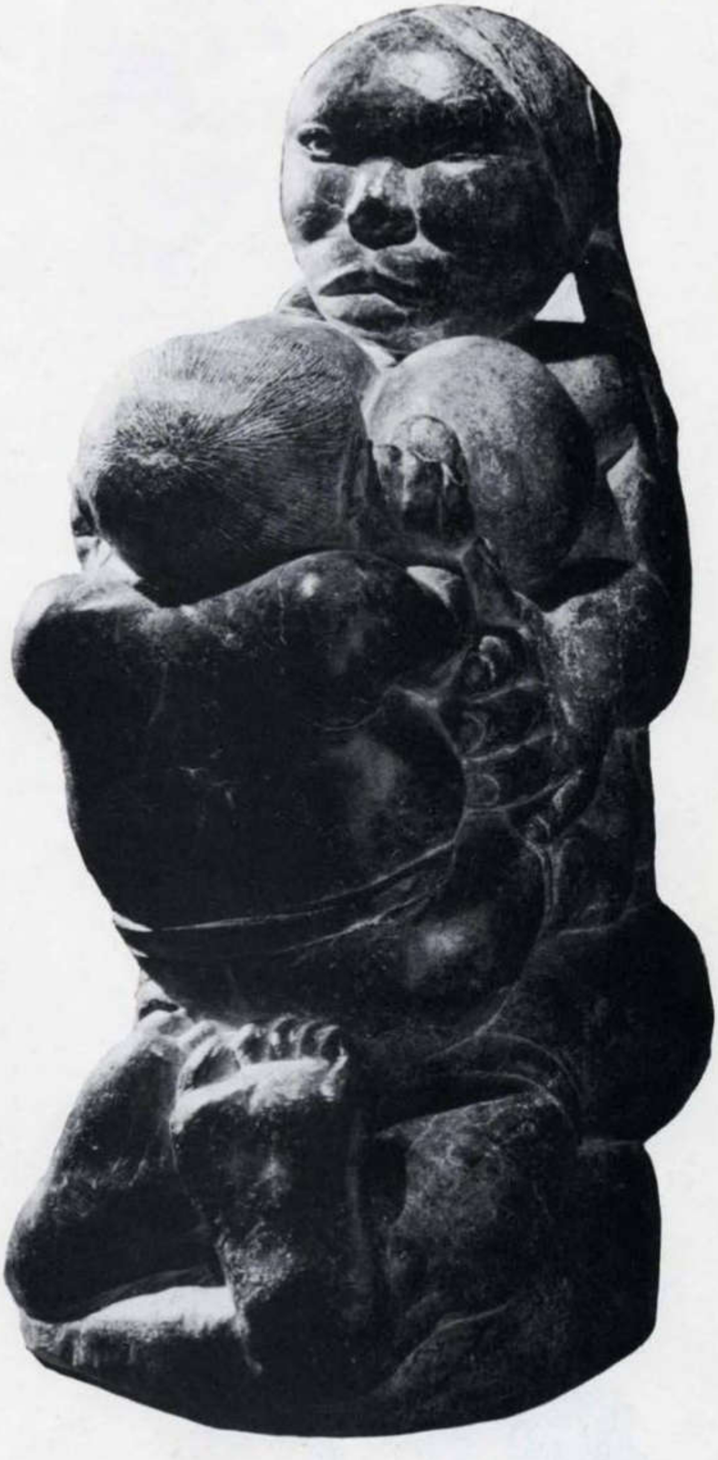
kinesthetic, preoccupied with settings, and time conscious, while deriving new scope for artistic composition from the form of bulky rounded shapes and smooth surfaces typical of arctic clothing. In contrast to the partial or complete nudity of early Eskimo art, modern Inuit figurines are invariably fully dressed. At one community there has recently developed a trend back to nude forms, but this represents perhaps a different concept of nudity allied to Western eroticism, and something that has already taken hold in Alaska.

Despite all new stylistic influences, the modern carving phase, though not "primitive" art, is still Eskimo art and distinctively so. Particularly at its inception, it possessed a degree of vitality and inspiration probably unmatched in comparable situations of culture contact across the globe. Wendell Oswalt reflects that "it does seem significant that the Eskimos involved not only adapted to the new set of requirements but also have contributed original and highly pleasing works in soapstone".

This is not to say that the Eskimo carvers faithfully maintain a high level of creative expression. Expanding commercial opportunities have had a corrupting effect, and the percentage of uninspired and indifferent work has steadily risen. Swinton is assuredly right when he divides them into artists, craftsmen, and mere imitators, and adds that "if we do not make these classifications time will do it anyhow".

The people who began creating this work in 1949 were for the most part still living as Eskimos, albeit in a period of transition and acculturation. The old motivations for artistic activity had vanished, but not the ability to instil in their new mode of carving an authentic element reflecting their present status as it grows more and more remote from the traditional way of life. When the Eskimo ceases to be a hunter and to live off the land, his art will become devoid of that unique intimacy with nature on which it has always been based. Whatever follows after will never again excite and fascinate us to the same degree as did that sudden surge of "free art" in the Fifties.

The continuing practice of classifying contemporary Canadian Eskimo carvings and prints as "primitive" art is surely unwarranted. We are dealing here not with an ancient communally significant "primitive" art, but with a new outgrowth: experimental and highly personal. As a valid art form in its own right, and one of considerable merit, it serves at present as a reflection of the individual Eskimo himself in a state of transition. Studied and understood on its own terms, and on the strength of its true character, this modern phase will be found to contain elements of supernal value and may provide us with unsuspected insights into present day Eskimo life.



Mother feeding child, by Johnnie Inukpuk, Port Harrison, 1962, 19 inches high.

Eskimos washing, by Charlie Seeguapik (Sheruapik) of Povungnituk, 1954-5.

A WISHFUL GLANCE AT THE FUTURE

In his recent volume on arctic carvings, George Swinton contends that "what these objects may mean to the Eskimo is not wholly relevant to their meaning to us as works of art. It is precisely here that art and anthropology go separate roads, sometimes running parallel to each other, but at other times leading in totally different—even opposite—directions". The same author also makes the candid admission that "... in an evaluation of contemporary Eskimo carving, our judgments have to be based chiefly on criteria of Western art which are foreign to the Eskimo and not really applicable to Eskimo life". In Swinton's view, such a procedure nevertheless can be justified on the grounds that Euro-Canadian values and judgments have begun to permeate modern Eskimo existence.

But what critical standards are we supposed to adopt in evaluating *prehistoric* Eskimo art? The stock answer of Western art cognoscenti would be that an art object is capable of being adjudged and "appreciated" apart from the cultural setting which produced it, and without the viewer needing to be aware of its symbolic content, or to have any understanding of the aesthetic code that governed its formal creation, or even to know the function for which it was intended. Legitimate though such a standpoint might be, it could never lead to the achievement of anything other than a quite restricted appraisal, highly subjective, and made solely in terms of the viewer's own cultural precepts. Seen in a broader perspective such an approach fails to satisfy fully our intellectual curiosity. We strive for a deeper and more inclusive understanding. This we can only gain by immersing ourselves in the ethos from which the object of our contemplation has emerged.

Some years ago the British author and Africanist, Basil Davidson, wrote that, "Art books are . . . improving . . . The main improvement is to be found in what the writers say. Their commentaries begin to make sense. Archaeology and Anthropology have helped to work a powerful revolution. We are no longer asked to rest content with vapid comparisons suggesting that this African style is "strangely reminiscent of the Cubists" or that one is "inherently Baroque", or some other one merely monumental. The reputable writer on Negro Art today knows that he must explain his object in aesthetic and historical terms that belong to African categories of thought and experience".

How apt those observations are in regard to arctic art as well! Future research ought to be centred on the Eskimo artist himself, his individual life experiences, tastes, values, concepts, and the manner in which these are reflected in his art. Arctic anthropologists themselves have been negligent in this respect. Their cursory treatment of traditional Eskimo art essentially in terms of non-art, and their failure to accord due attention to the modern art phase has long since aroused impatience.

Unfortunately, because of this unsatisfactory state of affairs there has been a tendency to place great reliance on Western art critics for an evaluation of Eskimo art. The basic flaw here is that these critics stand twice removed from the subject matter on which they venture to give their opinions. In the first place they are in-

Wrestlers, by Paulusie of Sugluk, 1960, 8 inches high. One carving shown in three positions.

terpreters and not the original creators, and secondly they are "outsiders" with regard to Eskimo culture. The element of subjectivity in their judgments is thus greatly increased. This is not to say that Western art critics do not have observations to make on Eskimo art which will happily provide us with new insights, which the carver himself may not be aware of, or capable of making explicit to us. We need, however, to establish some rapport with the carvers themselves, so that we may be in a position to assess the commentaries of the art critics, rather than just accepting them at face value. What they have to say could be most perceptive, but it could also be wildly absurd. At present, how are we to judge?

The time has arrived to foster an integrative approach. Qualified persons, trained in both art and anthropology, should be invited to prepare and undertake a detailed research program into the life experiences of individual Eskimo artists, their attitudes towards existence and reality, and the manner in which these influence the creative work that they are producing today. In the process, some clues may even be obtained about the nature of the aesthetic framework adhered to by their long-dead predecessors in the north. ◆

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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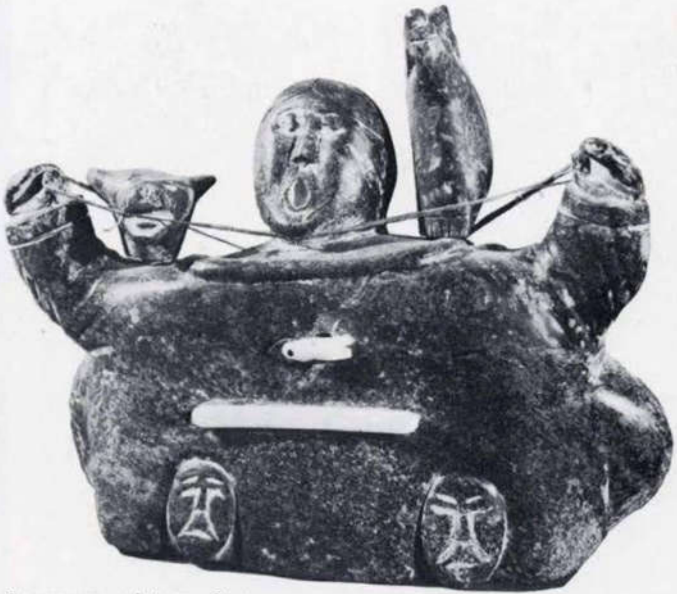
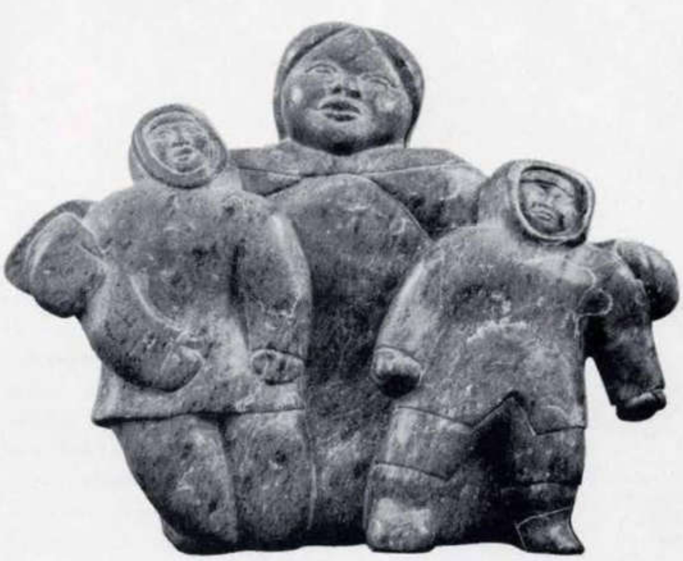
Photographs: Campbell & Chipman, 4, 15 top, 16 top left, 16 bottom, 18 top; George Swinton, 6a, b, c, 7 top, 13e, 16 top right, 18 bottom; National Museum of Canada, 7, 8, 9, 10 13a, b, 14 left, 19 top; Tom Prescott, 7 bottom, 15 bottom, 19 bottom; Bill Halkett, 11; N.F.B. 12 top; Richard Harrington, 12 bottom, 13f; Brigdens, 13c; T.D.F. 17; G. Szilasi, 19 middle.



Soapstone and ivory, Cape Dorset, c.1951-2, 8 inches wide.



Group by Kiawak (Keeowor) E7-1103, Cape Dorset, 1966.

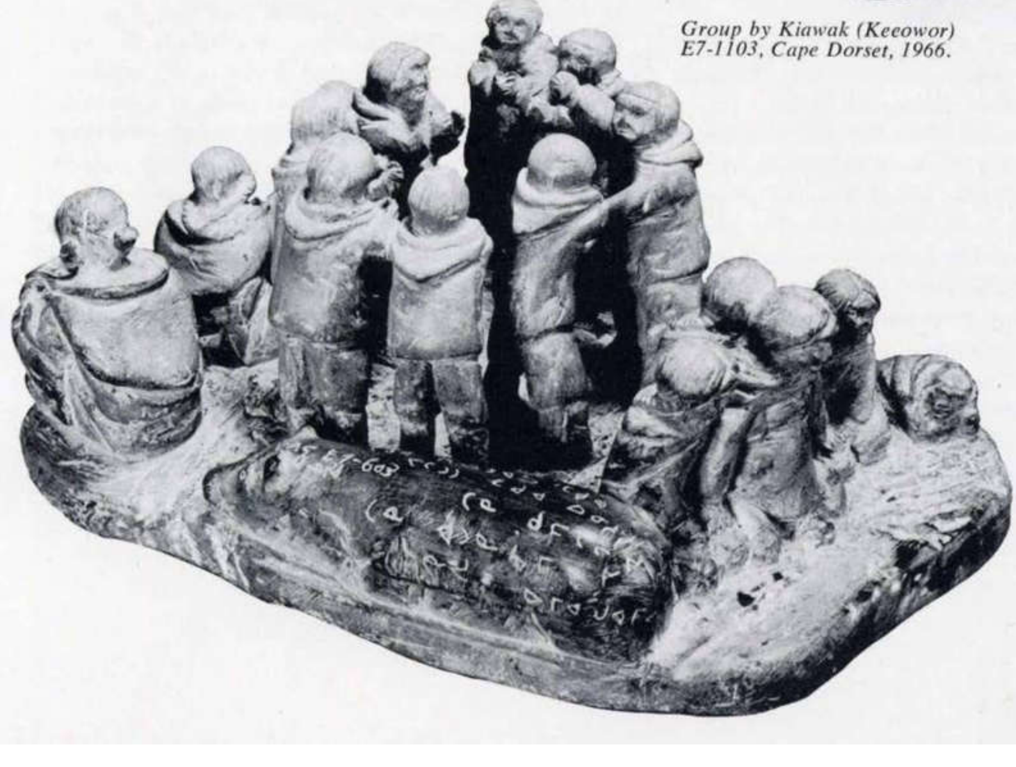
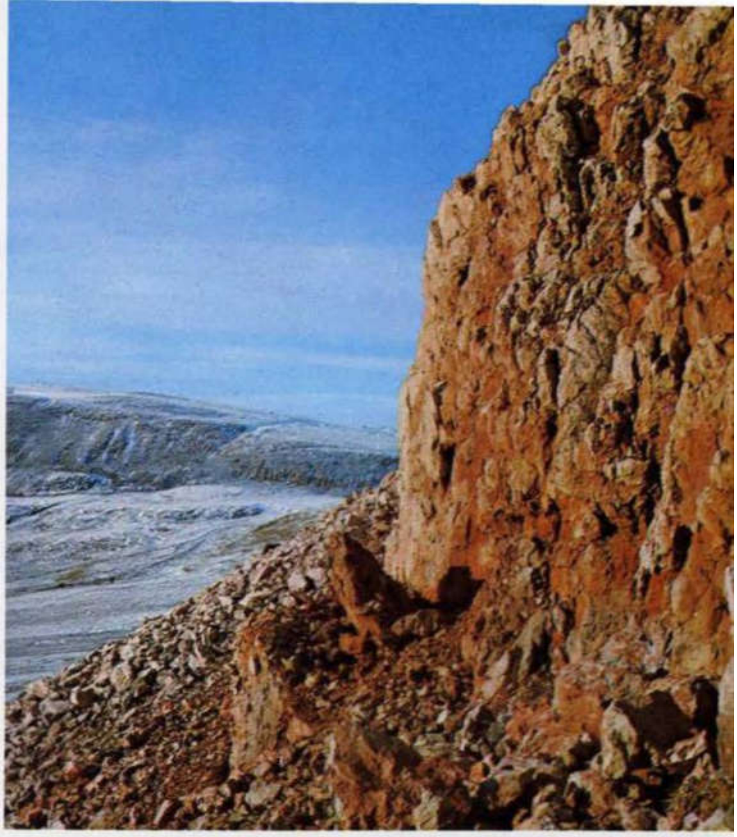


Tableau created by Ennutsiak of Frobisher Bay, 1966-7, commissioned by the Manitoba Branch of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, portrays Eskimo life: a woman giving birth, people dancing, men playing game of strength, women braiding sealskin, and syllabics on a caribou to tell the story. The base is 10 by 6 inches.

Artists of Arctic Bay



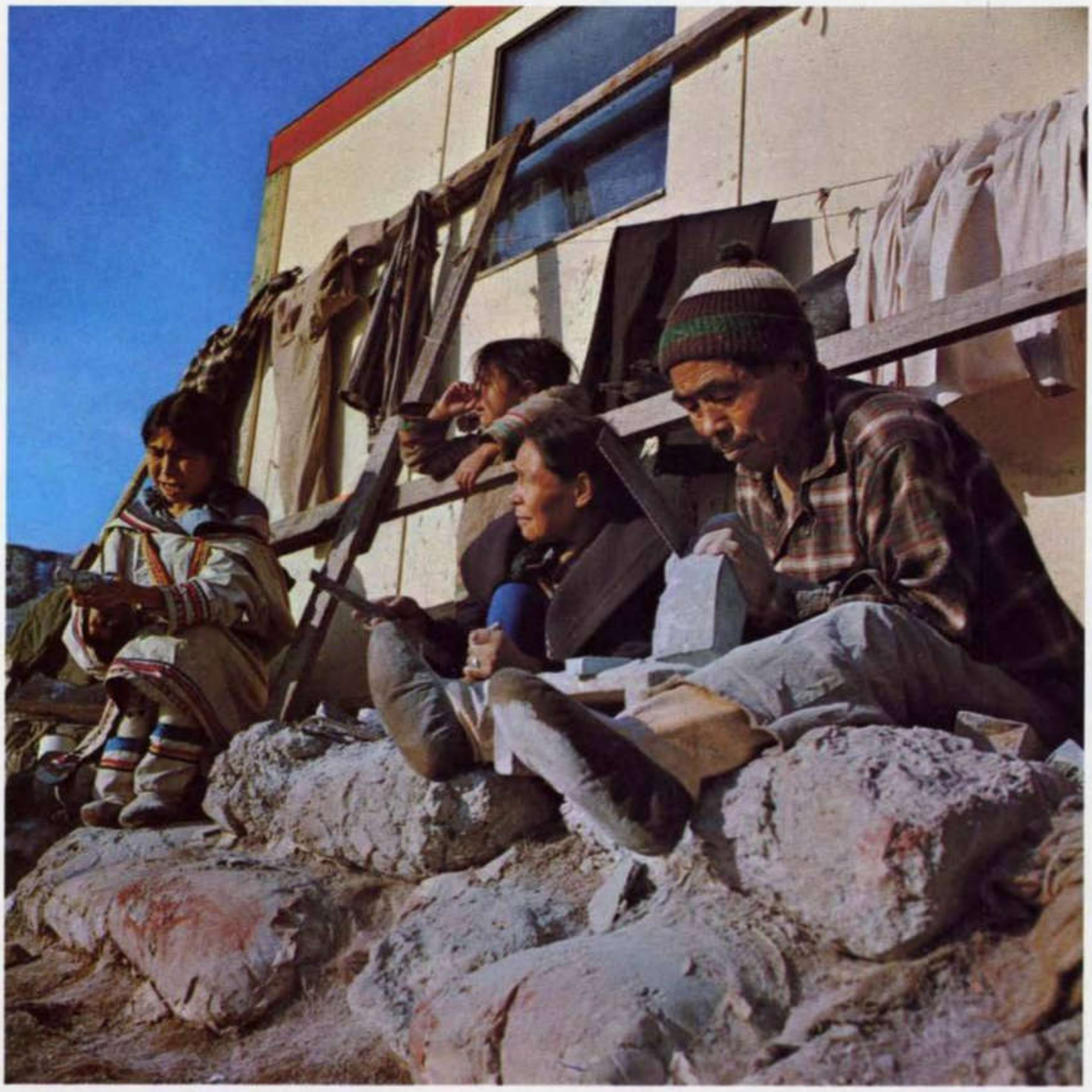
ONE OF THE MOST unusual assemblages of Eskimo sculpture is the large collection of Jerry F. Twomey of Winnipeg. In the course of many years Mr Twomey has followed the work of individuals and of family groups and his collection is unique in showing the artistic development of a certain man and often of his wife and children; increasing skill, trends of subject matter, relative similarity or dissimilarity in a group are thus evident. The influence of a successful carver on others in his neighbourhood can also be studied.

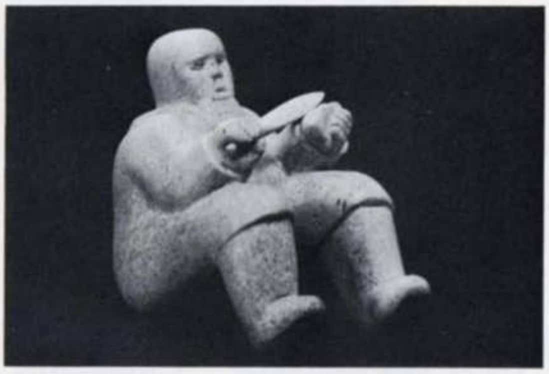
Mr Twomey has familiarized himself so thoroughly with his carvings that he can recognize instantly the work of many artists and in other cases he will be able to name the family or the settlement where the piece originated.

Shown here is the work of two families who live at Arctic Bay in northern Baffin Island. Their sculpture is a minute portion of the Twomey collection. The people were photographed at home in Arctic Bay, a small settlement set on a landlocked harbour where eighty to ninety people live and as many more come in from outlying camps to trade. There is a store, an Eskimo producers co-operative and sewing circle, a one-room school; once a year a Royal Canadian Mounted Police patrol pays a visit and twice a year a minister comes in; in the summer narwhals coast by the shore and in the winter the long night darkens most of the day. It is a poor area for game —no caribou, no muskoxen, only rarely a walrus, some ducks in summer—essentially it is a seal economy. Carving is not an important occupation as it is in some settlements farther south; hunting and trapping come first. When a hunter has leisure, he might turn to carving, and some for health reasons have made it their main occupation; similarly a woman with no skins to scrape and stretch and sew may fall back on carving.

Ancient bone of whales is scattered about the area, inland, and is often used for sculptures. The black baleen or whalebone is sometimes used for inset eyes. The local stone used for carving, which is not plentiful, is a hard grey rock with reddish patches of iron oxide; it takes a high polish and does not break as easily as most soapstone. Carvers work independently though sometimes husband and wife will influence each other's style or copy a subject. Everyone sells his own carving—no father would take his son's work, or that of anyone else, to the store for sale. In southerly settlements some years ago it was usual for the head of a household to do the trading and carvings made by women were often mistakenly attributed to their husbands.

The numbers following Eskimo names are an identification made by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. They are given here because with often a single name and a variety of phonetic spellings it may be impossible to know who is meant, and because most carvings now carry the number by way of signature.





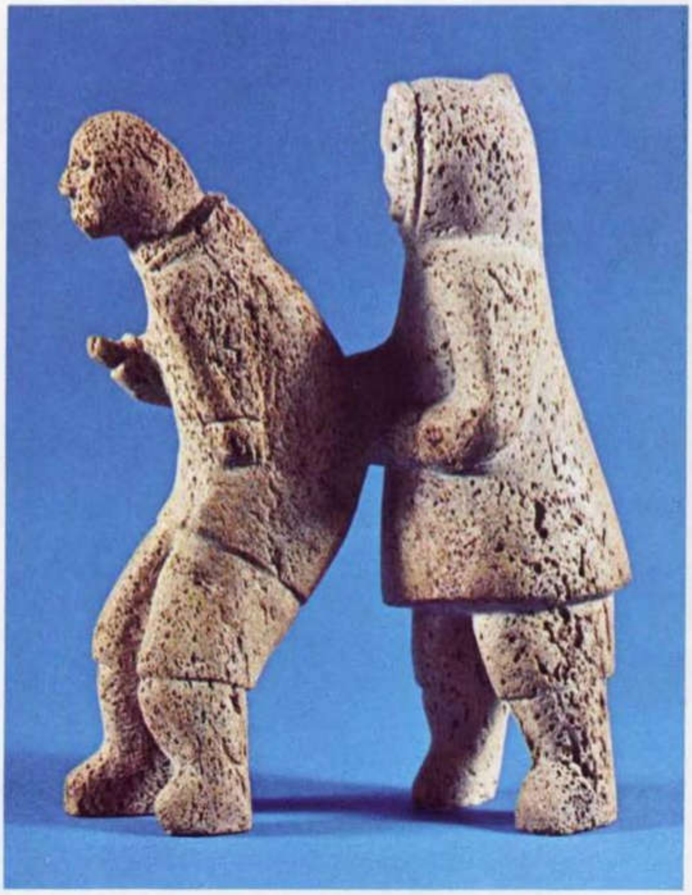
At Arctic Bay in 1966 a group of people sit outside in the summer sunshine to work at their carving. Paneeloo, at the left, finishes a figure, Elisapee Kanagna holds up the file she uses, and Ahlooloo shapes a block of stone with a saw. The sculpture at left, in whale bone, is by Ahlooloo.

Ahlooloo E5-88 was born in 1908. Primarily a hunter, he also worked for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as a guide and is called in the village "the policeman". Now, age, crippling arthritis, and a bad chest cause him to stay home most of the time—but he is always first out to greet the RCMP patrol in spring, proud of his past connection. His arthritis, strangely enough, is particularly bad on Sunday mornings, limiting his attendance at the new Anglican mission the Eskimos built for themselves. Ahlooloo used to live in a camp with two families but he is now in Arctic Bay where he and his family moved with another family into a new three-bedroom house last December. When his hunting days were done he took to carving.

Elisapee Kanagna E5-234, wife of Ahlooloo is, at nearly fifty one of the oldest women at Arctic Bay. She is amiable and jovial, like her husband, and good to talk to—but always in Eskimo. Her health is not very good and she and Ahlooloo lead a quiet life, spending much time carving.

Nashook E5-917 is their son, age 19. He has not the charm or alertness of his parents but he, too, is becoming a carver.

Koomanapik E5-235 is the daughter of Elisapee. She is married to Muckpa and they both produce some carvings but as a young couple with children their time for this is limited.



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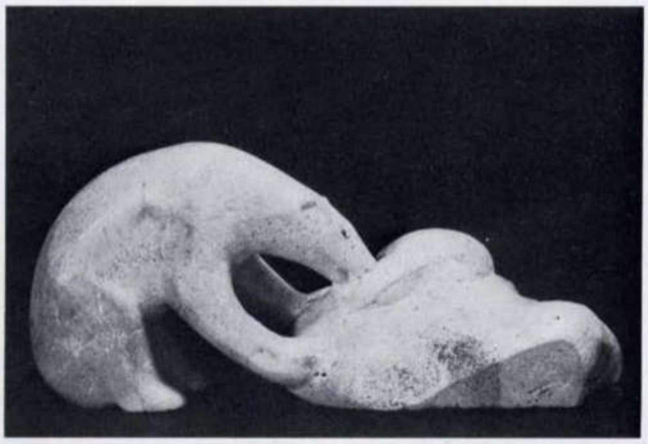
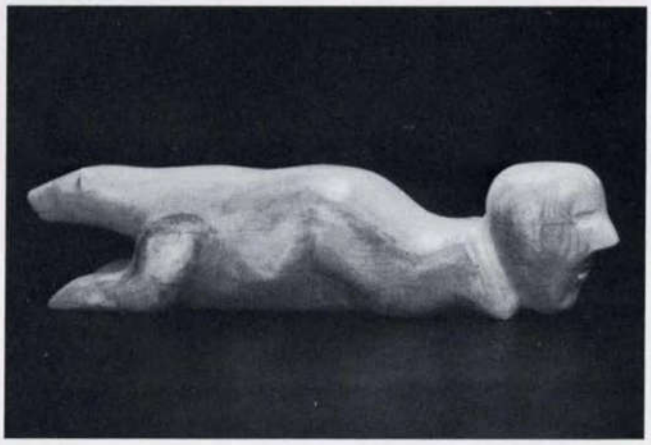




Opposite page: Elisapee Kanagna begins her work with a home-made adze. The sculptures are: bird and fish, whale bone, by Nashook (top); drum-dancer, whale bone with skin covered drum, by Ahlooloo; ptarmigan, stone, by Koomanapik.

On this page, the old man going to his death helped by his son, whale bone, is by Elisapee, 1961. The bear with seal, whale bone, and bear-man piece, stone, are by Ahlooloo who is shown at right.

ARCTIC BAY PHOTOS BY FRED BRUEMMER;
SCULPTURE PHOTOS BY TOM PRESCOTT
UNLESS CREDITED.

Paneeloo (left) has four children at home but she finds time to do a good deal of carving. In one of her pieces, below left, a bird in polished stone rests on a shadow bird of bone.

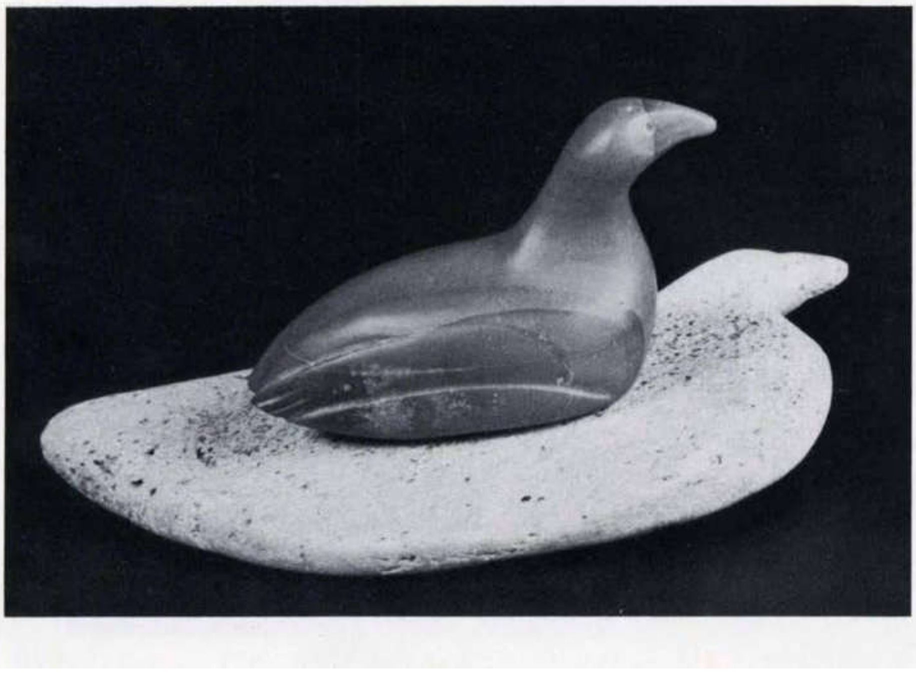
The bird in flight, below, is by Toongalook who is head of the dominant family in Arctic Bay.

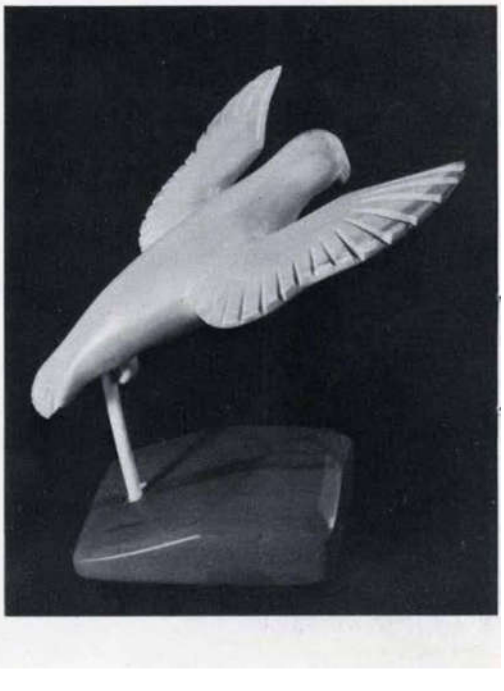
The sculptures on the opposite page are all by Kominerk and all executed in stone. The way in which the markings in the streaked rusty-red and greenish-grey rock are incorporated in the finished work is well shown in the bird at bottom right. The two heads on the right, man and woman, are the front and back of the same carving, the bearded man probably derived from Kominerk's grandfather. The piece is 4½ inches high.

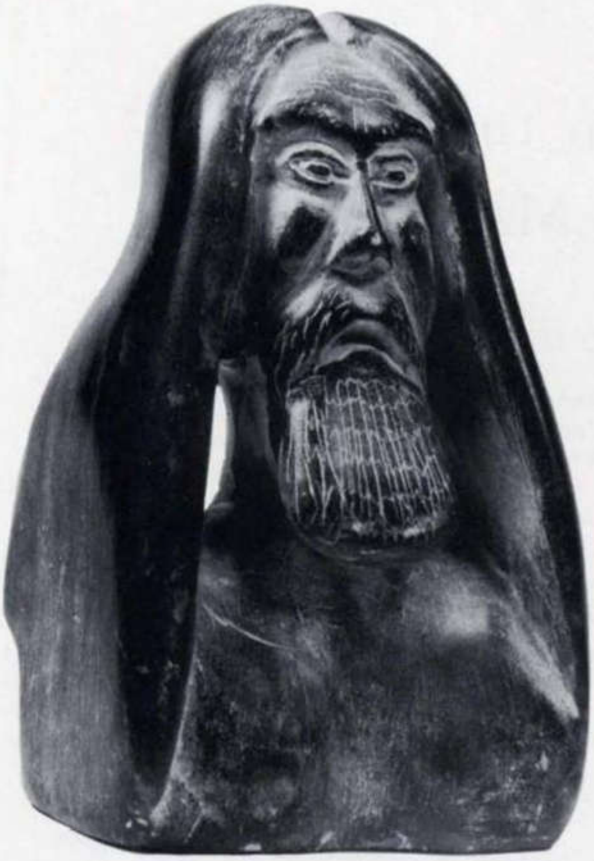
Kominerk (Kaminerk) E5-902 is the 34-year-old head of a household. He is a very reliable man with a good personality, a lively imagination and a keen sense of humour, and he is a hard worker. As church catechist he officiates in the absence of the minister. He was an excellent hunter but had a bad accident and nearly drowned; now he suffers from heart trouble. His main occupation is carving, which he would not do if his health permitted him to hunt. Kominerk is exceptional in that he has been to Toronto; what impressed him most was the vast number of people—he had heard but could not have believed there were that many in the world.

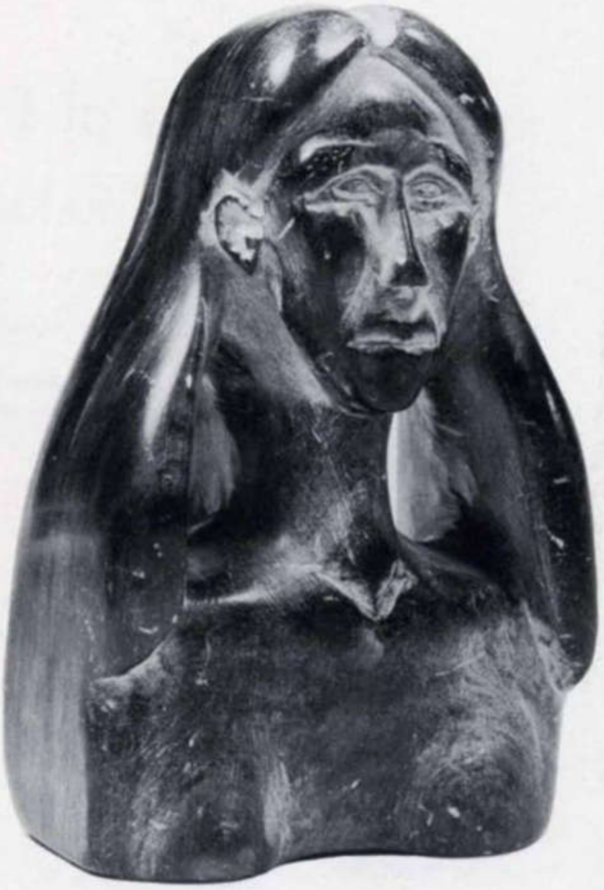
Paneeloo (Panooloo) E5-244 is the wife of Kominerk and two years younger. She came from a Pond Inlet camp and has travelled as far as Frobisher Bay. Having no skins to clean she spends a good deal of time carving.

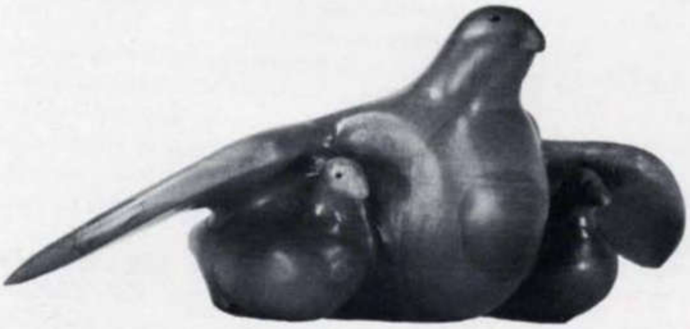
Toongalook E5-900 is the father of Kominerk. He too turned to carving because bad health interfered with his hunting though he used to make an odd piece on a winter evening even when out hunting. Now he seldom carves any more, preferring to tell the stories of his people. Notable in family annals is that Toongalook's father had a beard; this bearded man appears in carvings by Kominerk, by his brother Lootee Lew, and others. ◆

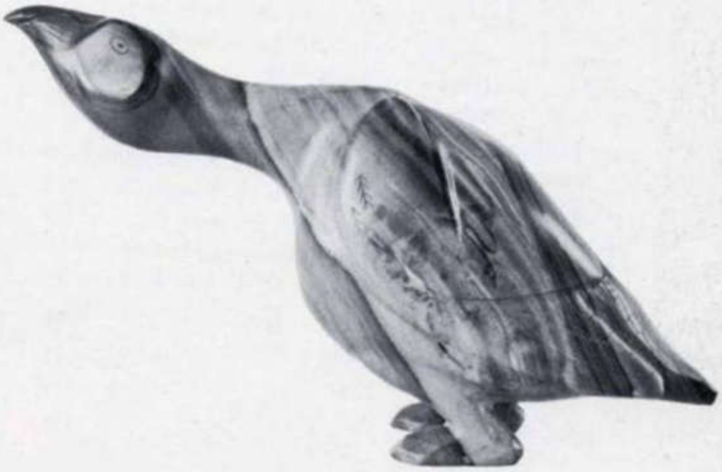












The Relation of Form to Iconography in Eskimo Masks

BY JOAN M. VASTOKAS

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ANY WORK OF ART may be seen as a purely visual phenomenon, as a configuration of lines, textures, shapes, colours, and volumes. These formal qualities, however, do not exist in a vacuum, but are fundamentally related to their subject matter or iconography. A demonstration of this relationship in Alaskan (Figs. 1-47) and Canadian (Figs. 48-54) Eskimo masks will be attempted here. Categories of masks based on visual criteria alone will first be established. Secondly, these formal groupings will be tested against known ethnographic data on the subject matter and function of the mask in Eskimo ritual and mythology. It is suggested here that Eskimo masks, in their dependence upon the mythological beliefs of the Eskimo, may communicate meaning not only through subject matter, but also through visual form.

A purely visual analysis of a random sampling discloses several distinct categories of Eskimo masks. Masks in the first major grouping (Figs. 1-9) display naturalistic and less naturalistic human features. Figures 1-4 form a sub-category. They show greater naturalism than all other groupings and are free of gross distortions and of composite parts. Sculptural qualities are evident in the smoothly-rounded features and in the portrayal of bony and muscular structure. Simplicity of silhouette results in a closed contour and symmetry rules the disposition of facial features.

Masks in Figures 5-9, while still recognizably human in appearance, are distinct from the above and form a second sub-category because of the occurrence of some distortion, asymmetry, greater use of colour and less interest in revealing the bony and muscular structure beneath the skin.

Animal-face masks, animal faces with human-like faces attached, and animal bodies with human-like faces inserted constitute a second major grouping (Figs. 10-31). Figures 10-20 range in degree of naturalism from that of the walrus in Figure 10, in which muzzle hairs are indicated by split quills, to such a mask as that in Figure 19. These masks, however, seem to have more formal qualities in common with each other than with any other group. All are recognizable as animals, ferociousness is absent from the animal's disposition, composite parts are rare, symmetry prevails, and, finally, the simple, closed contour creates a sense of repose or a lack of independent motility.

In Figures 21-25 animal and human faces are combined by various formal devices that suggest a dual relationship between animal and man. The cordial demeanour of the animal is often echoed in the human face. The relationship between human and animal features may vary, but animal characteristics dominate. Formal treatment tends toward abstraction in a simplifying sense. In Figure 23, for example, colouring is arbitrary and almost decorative in effect; the basic blue is covered with white spots and eyes are red and white. The distortion and simplification of the human face inside the bird's beak, its reduction to a crescentic, down-turned mouth and four openings, either pair serving as eyes, corresponds with the abstract nature of the bird's face.

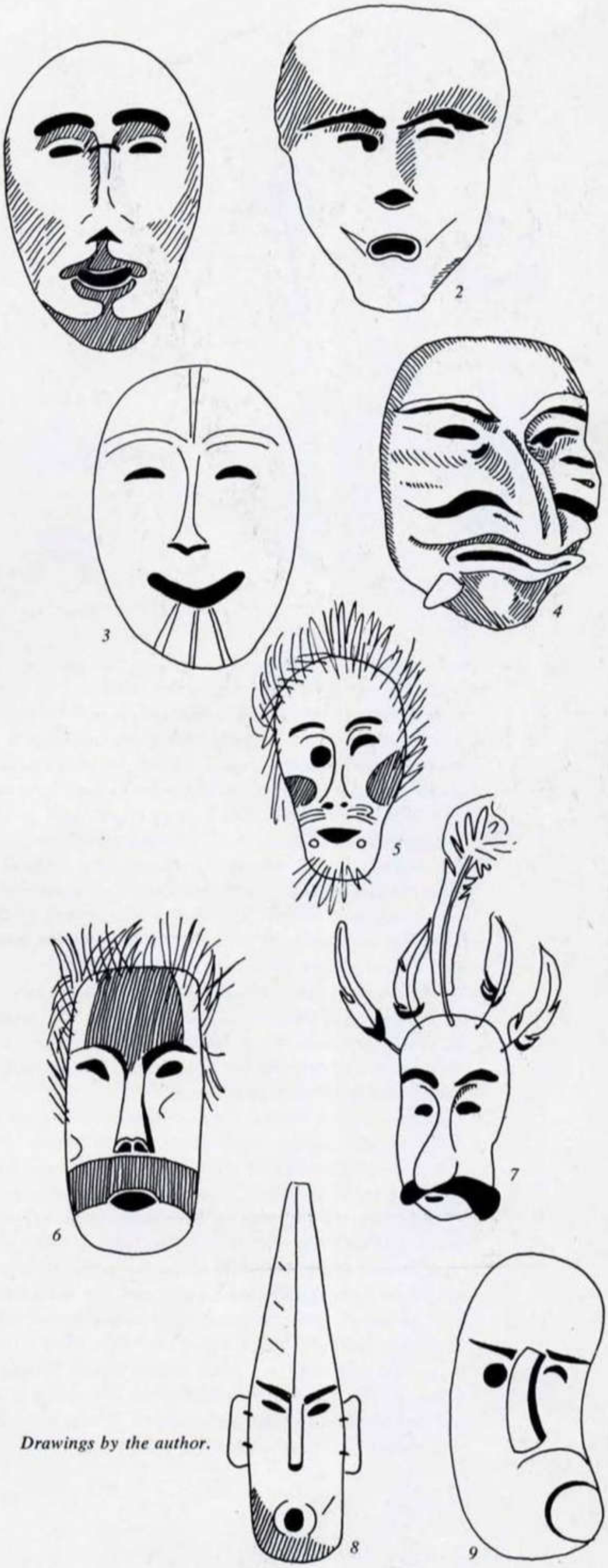
The remaining animal masks (Figs. 26-31), except for their considerable complexity, are less easily classified owing to the equal importance given the animal body and human face. In most examples the animal provides a background for the insertion of a human face. Moreover, the human face sometimes echoes characteristics of the animal. In Figure 29, for example, the human mouth is similar, in V-shape and profusion of teeth, to the animal mouth.

Considerable distortion and abstraction marks a third major visual grouping of Eskimo masks (Figs. 32-41). Here, human features again occur, but these have become barely recognizable. Although ranging widely in form and construction, an imaginative sense of design is evident in the sensitive balancings, echoes, and repetitions of similar shapes, volumes, and lines, and in pleasing colour harmonies (especially Figs. 33, 38 and 39). The use of composite, added parts endows many of these masks with animation. In Figure 41, for example, the mask has no fixed orientation and may be viewed from several angles, the mask assuming a new configuration with each change in viewpoint. Some force seems to extend its powers beyond the boundary of the face into the appendages, down through the slender, suspended objects into surrounding space. The mask is thus an embodiment of energy and a visual means of communication between tangible substance and invisible space, between materiality and immateriality.

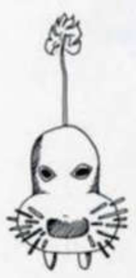
A final category (Figs. 42-47) includes miscellaneous forms which are difficult to place in the above groupings. Figure 44, for example, which contains a human face that resembles many in the second category, is inserted, not in an animal face, but in a non-representational shape. Similarly, though Figure 43 portrays a naturalistic, human face, the surrounding border does not occur in masks of the first major category. Eskimo masks thus seem to fall into four visual categories. It remains to examine Eskimo mythology and ritual to explore the possible relationships between form and iconography in these masks.

In the Eskimo's view of the world, all things, animate and inanimate—men, animals, plants, seasons, stones, shadows—are endowed with an inner vitality or spirit, the *inua*. The *inua*, having human characteristics, is capable of assuming human shape. It cannot be defined as the "soul", for only men and animals have souls. Other terms, such as *tornrait* or *tunghat* refer, not to a special class of spirits, but to very powerful *inua*. These may be the soul of a departed person, animal, or other being. Also, anything unusual or mysterious, the *sila*, constitutes a third entity in the supernatural world of the Eskimo. *Sila* may refer not only to forces of nature such as the weather and seasons, but even to the universe itself. Neither good nor evil, the *sila* is considered extremely powerful and is to be treated with caution. In addition to the above spirits, there are known mythological or legendary beings. These, such as the "man in the moon", although probably related to the *inua*, may be distinct from the more fundamental beliefs. All these entities or forces, despite their various designations, appear to be essentially extensions of the animistic *inua* notion, the sense of the vitality in all things.

This world of invisible entities may be seen only rarely, only under special conditions, and most often by the shaman who is believed capable of communication with the supernatural and of influencing the spiritual forces for the good of the community. The shaman, assisted by



Drawings by the author.



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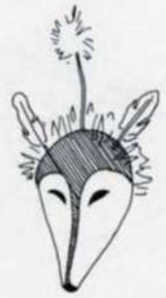

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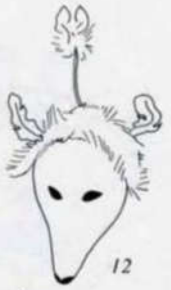

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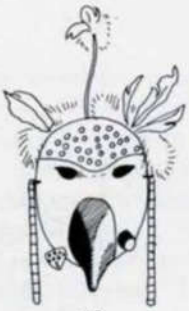

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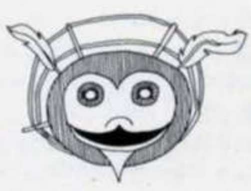

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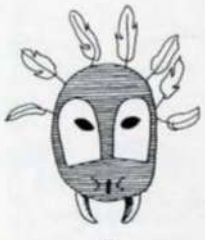

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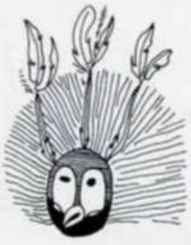

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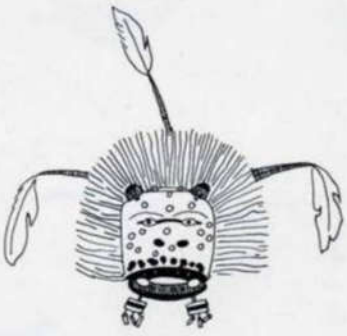

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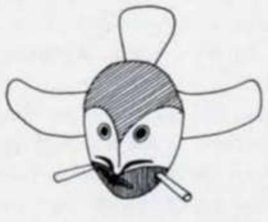

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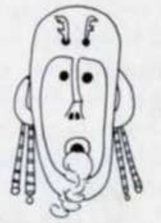

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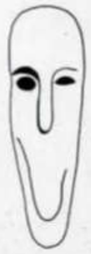

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spirit helpers, can enter an animal, become one with it, and influence the animal during the hunt.

According to ethnographic accounts, it is these spirits which reside in all things that are given visual form in many "sacred" Eskimo masks. Masks, both secular and sacred in function, were usually worn in the "Inviting-In" feast, one of the several hunting rituals held by the Alaskan Eskimo. The aim was to honour and please either the animals themselves, or the powers that controlled them, in order that the community would be assured of a continuing food supply. The spirits were invited to the feast and were believed to be present to enjoy the songs and dances held in their honour. The shaman seems to have been in charge of this festival, directing the carvers in the making of "sacred" or *inua* masks and the dances in which they were worn. Among the Alaskan Eskimo, then, masks portraying the *inua* seem to have been a component of the shamanistic complex.

Little is known regarding the events and behaviour of audience and dancers at Alaskan masked rituals, but some useful information is provided by Hawkes who recorded an "Inviting-In" feast held in the winter of 1911-12. On the first day of the ritual, comic masked dancers (Figs. 5-7) entertained the Eskimo hosts and their human guests. A purely social event, this performance was without religious significance. On the second day, no masks were worn, only pantomime dances were performed. But on the third and final day, when an air of greater solemnity prevailed, animal masks appeared (Figs. 10-13). The last to perform was the shaman. At the end of his trance-like performance, during which he was believed to have communicated with the world of spirits, he informed the audience that the *inua* of the animals had been pleased with the dances and had promised their continued assistance in the hunt.

In the Canadian Eskimo region, ritual use of masks is known, but masks are rarer and ritual is much less elaborated. In Baffin Island, for example, some masks are worn by the shaman in festivals honouring the "sea-goddess" *Sedna*. Other Baffin Island masks, however, have a strictly secular, comic function (Figs. 48-49). Masks may also have been used in west Greenland with probable religious associations, but in Labrador (Figs. 50-54), they seem to have been charged with a secular function. As in the case of the western Alaskan comic masks, the masked performances in Labrador are, according to Frank Speck, "in the nature of semi-formal competitive dramatic comedies, social functions without religious meaning." The masked performer, wearing tattered clothing, carrying a stick, and indulging in comical antics, entertained not at hunting rituals, but at social gatherings. Of significance for our purposes is the fact that the Labrador masks, apparently all comic in function, portray, not animal, but human faces (Figs. 50-54). Together with the comic, naturalistic, human face masks of western Alaska (Figs. 5-9), these comic mask customs, it has been suggested by Speck, and independently concluded here, appear to be original to the Eskimo. They may represent a link between the Alaskan and Labrador Eskimo and probably constitute an archaic mask tradition, distinct from the masks of the Alaskan shamanistic complex.

The various categories of natural and supernatural beings conceived by the Eskimo and made manifest in their dances seem to correspond to the visual categories of masks first presented. Subject matter and form may be related to such a degree that despite lack of precise information regarding the identity of specific masks, a grouping may be roughly identified as portraying one class of beings as distinct from another on the basis of visual evidence alone. This correlation between form and subject matter appears valid in light of the following observations on the categories of masks already established.

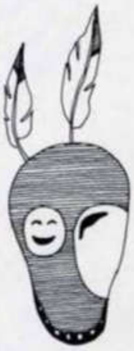
A number of masks have been recorded as depicting known men, ancestors, or just "men's faces", such as Figure 2 which portrays "a Russian". Noteworthy in these masks is the relatively naturalistic and sculptural vocabulary of expression. These masks, consistently referred to in accounts as men or ancestors, are the ones which have been visually grouped together in Figures 1-4.

Other masks have been recorded as "comic", that is, masks of purely secular function worn in the Alaskan "Inviting-In" feast and Eskimo masks from Baffin Island and Labrador. These correspond to Figures 5-9 and 48-54 and constitute masks that are recognizably human, but less naturalistic than the masks portraying men or ancestors.

Masks of the second major visual category (Figs. 10-31), including the animal masks worn after the comic masks during the "Inviting-In" feast, are consistently referred to by ethnographers as "animal-spirit" or "*inua*" masks. The visual differences observed within the category, that is, between the three sub-groupings, probably represent various ways of expressing the human-like *inua* that is contained within the animal. This double function of the mask as vehicle of the animal and the animal's human-like spirit is expressed by formal means. Although animal features dominate (Fig. 11), many masks are given human characteristics as well. In Figure 13, for example, the "Crow's" face is man-like; it has human eyes and wears labrets. In the "Raven" mask (Fig. 19), what appears to be a human face is distorted to approximate the features of a bird. Mouth and chin are elongated to resemble a bird's beak and, while one eye is almond-shaped and man-like, the other is round as a bird's. The dual nature of the *inua* is thus expressed by combining animal with human characteristics.

Figures 21-25 show another artistic means of depicting the animal's *inua*, yet even this category includes several formal variations. In the "Wolf" and "Black Bear" masks (Figs. 21-22), the animal's eye is replaced by a cheerful, human-like face. In Figure 24, a "Seal", the mask is provided with two faces. In Figure 23, the "Sea Parrot" opens its beak to reveal its *inua*. Finally, in Figure 25, the human content has achieved dominance, the animal being confined to the nose of the human face.

Still another method of portraying the *inua* is evident in Figures 26-31, in which the human face is inserted in the animal's body. These varied methods, however, may correspond to different notions as to where in the animal's body the *inua* is believed to reside. The East Greenland Eskimos, for example, maintain that every person has several souls, one living in the throat and one in the groin, each about the size of a young sparrow. Of interest also is the Eskimo carver's apparent attempt to give the human face something of the quality of the animal whose spirit it portrays (Fig. 29). This is in keeping, perhaps, with the Eskimo belief that the *inua* resembles the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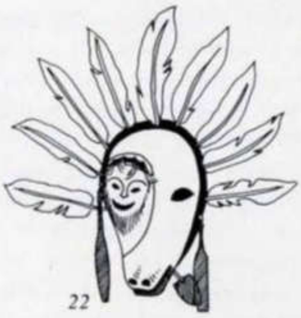
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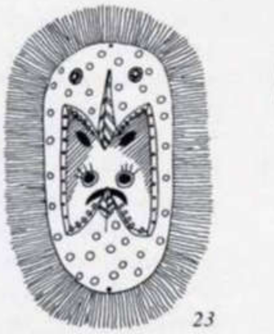
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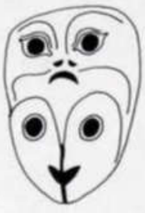
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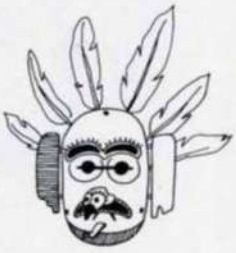
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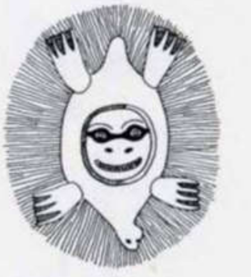
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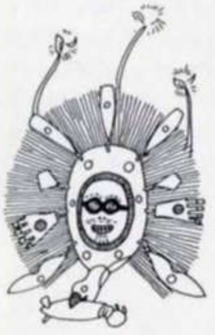
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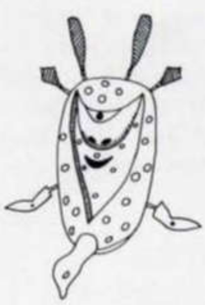
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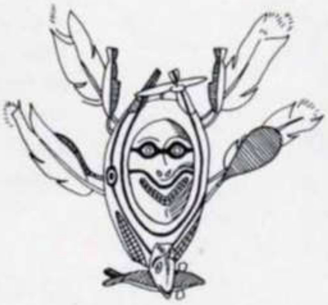
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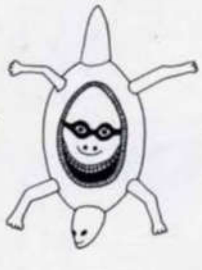
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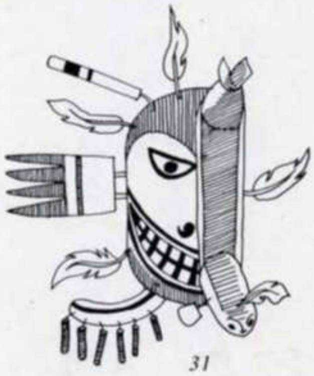
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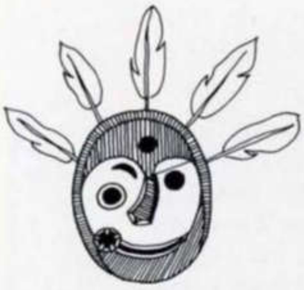

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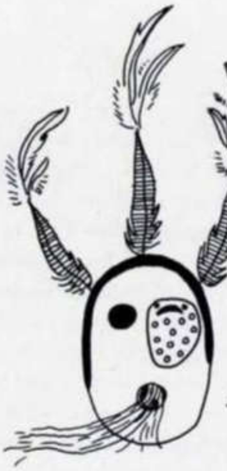

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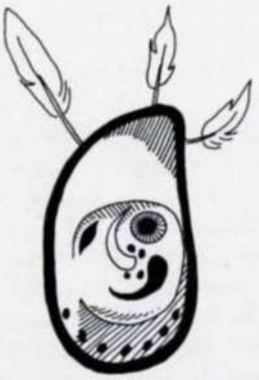

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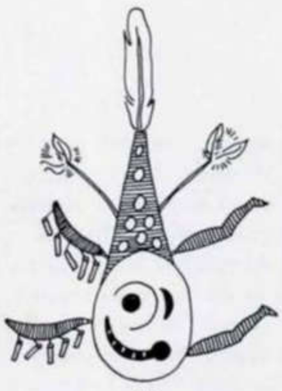

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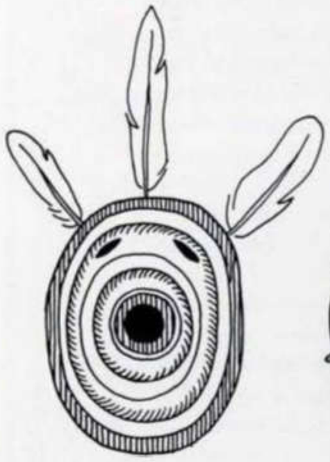

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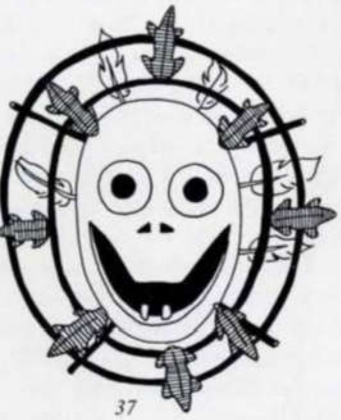

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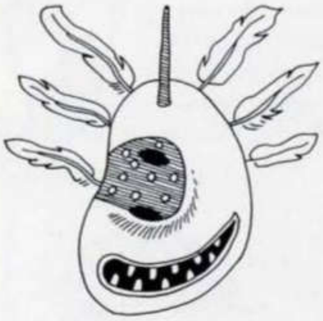

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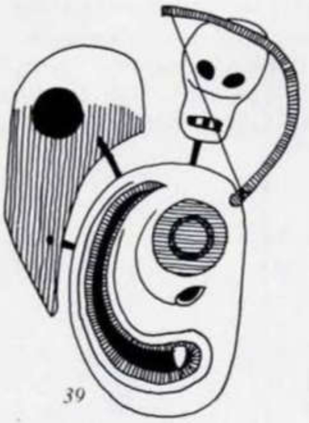

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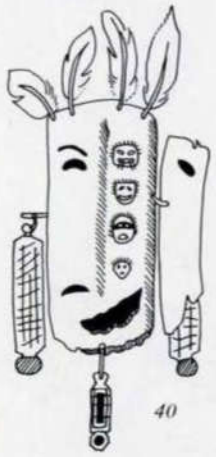

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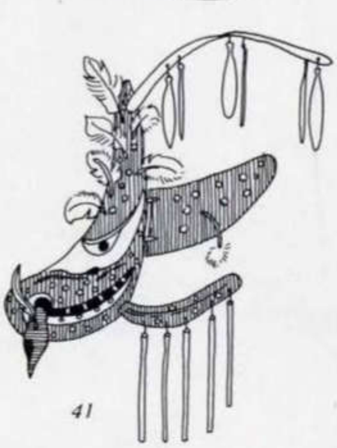

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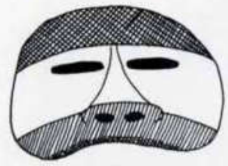
exterior physical characteristics of the animal in which it resides.

Masks in the third major visual category, according to information in ethnographic accounts, portray, not ordinary animal *inua*, but those powerful, fantastic animal spirits (*tunghat*) and beings that represent vague and mysterious forces (*sila*) such as the weather and the "Spirit of Autumn" (Fig. 37). In keeping with the awesome nature of these spirits, a corresponding set of stylistic features is peculiar to this category of masks. Compared with the lesser feared animal spirits, a greater abstraction may be observed. As already indicated, these masks are characterized by asymmetry, reduction, distortion, alternation of eye forms, non-naturalistic colouring, use of additional eyes, and abundant use of composite parts. One may also speculate on the significance of the relationship between this set of formal qualities and the Eskimo concept of the supernatural. Since the Eskimo believe that these powerful spirits were seen only by the shaman in his trance-like visions, those masks showing extreme distortions probably portray spirits supposedly seen by the shaman. These composite, dynamic, and irregular forms may be related, therefore, to their visionary source in the imagination of the shaman.

In sum, the visual categories established at the beginning reveal an increasing degree of formal abstraction and fantasy alongside an increasing functional degree of power and sacredness. In other words, formal qualities may be so intimately related to the subject matter or iconography of Eskimo masks that meaning—power, awesomeness, and inscrutability, for example—is communicated through form as well as subject matter.

Those miscellaneous masks which did not seem to enter into any cohesive category appear, to the limited extent of our knowledge, to depict various mythological personalities rather than spiritual forces or *inua*. Here also, the artistic qualities of the form seem affected by the Eskimo's concept of the particular being concerned. Figure 45, for example, in its smooth surface planes and non-naturalistic character, portrays "some mythical being". Figure 47 also, while variously reported as a shaman's mask, a *tunghat* mask, or as the "thinking spirit of the



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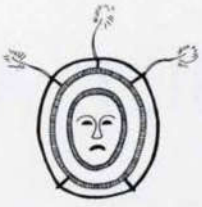

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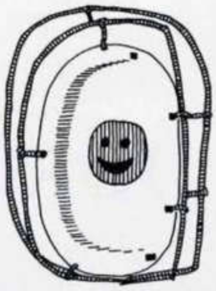

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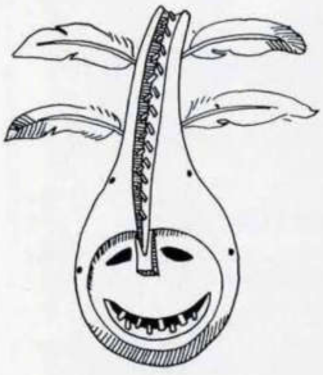

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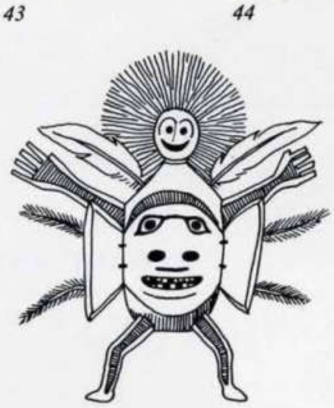

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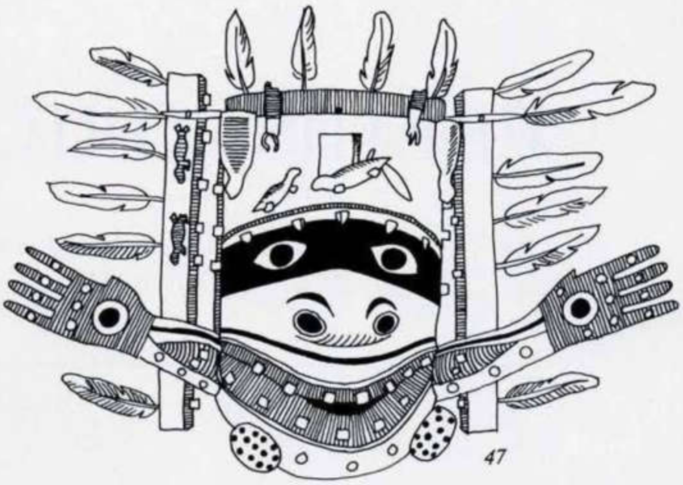

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father of the seal tribe" may, in fact, portray the legendary "Moon-Man".

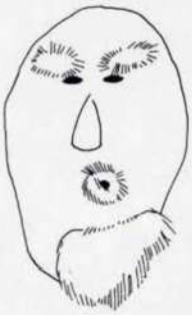
In conclusion, two important correspondences may be observed in the above categories of masks:

I. FORM & ICONOGRAPHY
naturalism = comic masks with human faces
abstraction = powerful spirit masks
II. FORM & DISTRIBUTION
naturalistic, comic masks = widespread among Eskimo
dynamic, abstract, composite masks = predominant in western Alaska

That the Eskimo artist conveys, in visual terms, his conception of the spirit world, supports Edmund Carpenter's observations among the Eskimo of Southampton Island:

> The object isn't seen at an artistic remove; instead, the carver enters into it, mingles, fuses with it. He doesn't remain apart, contemplating, controlling, but to the extent his cognition impinges upon it, he participates in Sealness or Walrus-ness. This participation isn't limited to the sense of sight, for Aivilik art doesn't render the visible; it renders visible. It portrays not merely what is perceived, but what is known and true, and since truth here involves all senses, plus tradition and imagination, it embraces all cognition (*Eskimo*, 1959).

An Eskimo mask, then, has to do with several levels of experience: the formal, the iconographic, the social, the religious, and the imaginative. Correspondingly, the analysis of such a work of art cannot advance along an isolated stratum: form is affected by iconography which is in turn related to social and religious needs and controlled by the imagination of the Eskimo artist. ◆



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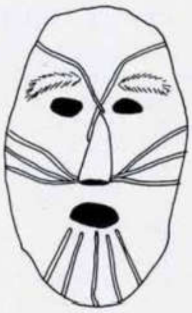

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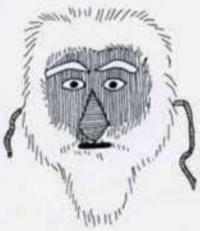

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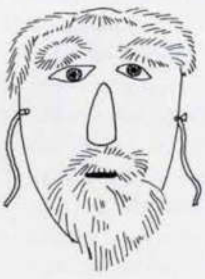

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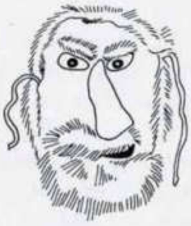

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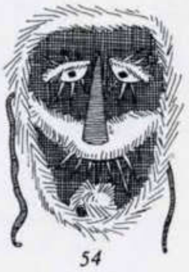

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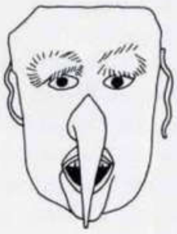

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Figs. 48, 49, 50, 51, 52 and 53 are drawn after Speck, "Labrador, Eskimo Mask and Clown," *General Magazine (& Historical Chronicle)* Volume 37, 1935.

The writer would like to thank Professor Douglas Fraser, Department of Art History, Columbia University, New York, for suggesting the topic.

PREHISTORIC DORSET ART

a discussion by an archaeologist and an artist

WILLIAM E. TAYLOR, JR.
the archaeologist
Director, Museum of Human History
National Museum of Canada

THE SILENT ECHOES OF CULTURE

PREHISTORIC MAN persisted in many and diverse environments and perhaps in none more harsh than arctic Canada. Yet there, as everywhere else, he created art—art that makes manifest his fears and aspirations, expresses his feelings and thoughts, reflects his worlds. Because it is the silent echo of culture, art brings one closer to prehistoric men and the cultures in which they existed. Thus aboriginal art concerns both the art historian and the archaeologist. The first studies it as art, as experience, as expression; the second examines it as a means for learning more about the culture, its intellectual processes, technology and relationships with other cultures. We focus here on the art of the Dorset period for it is, so far as is known, the most developed art in Canadian Eskimo prehistory and one meriting far wider recognition—and because we are very fond of the stuff.

To provide some chronological setting one may offer a précis of Canadian Eskimo prehistory from a recent *Beaver* (Taylor, Spring 1965). Although much indeed remains unknown, Canadian Eskimo origins can be traced back about 5,000 years to Bering Strait and from there the trail wanders away through several routes into Asia. Within the Canadian tundra the story seems readily divisible into four major periods or stages. First there was the Pre-Dorset culture stage of people with a basically Eskimo way of life and these drifted eastward across the deglaciated Canadian Arctic from Alaska to Green-

Taylor continues on left pages

GEORGE SWINTON
the artist
Professor at the School of Art
University of Manitoba

THE MAGICO-RELIGIOUS BASIS

FOR THE PAST YEAR Taylor and I jointly inspected a group of carvings as well as photographs of Dorset culture art. We discussed them, perhaps not sufficiently, but always passionately. For, as Taylor says, we are very fond of the stuff.

Our different points of view (as much the result of our different training as of our personalities) made us decide to write our comments separately. We admittedly affected each other's thoughts, but never moulded them, and we felt therefore that we should present our thoughts individually, in accordance with our ideas as they developed in our discussions and in our subsequent, separate reflections. Also, not having been fortunate enough to have been trained as an archaeologist, my ethnological and archaeological speculations would not harm Taylor's professional reputation, for fools rush in. . . .

All prehistoric Eskimo art has one common feature—inconspicuous size. Compared with almost all other art forms of other cultures, Eskimo art appears singularly unheroic; non-epic; small, almost intimate. Even at its most elaborate and ornate, as in the early northwest Alaskan Ipiutak art, size never plays an important role. Yet scale does, and so does strength; particularly in Dorset art, which exudes intensity and power (*not* monumentality!) despite its remarkable subtlety and delicacy. This accounts for the greater vitality of Dorset art as

Swinton continues on right pages

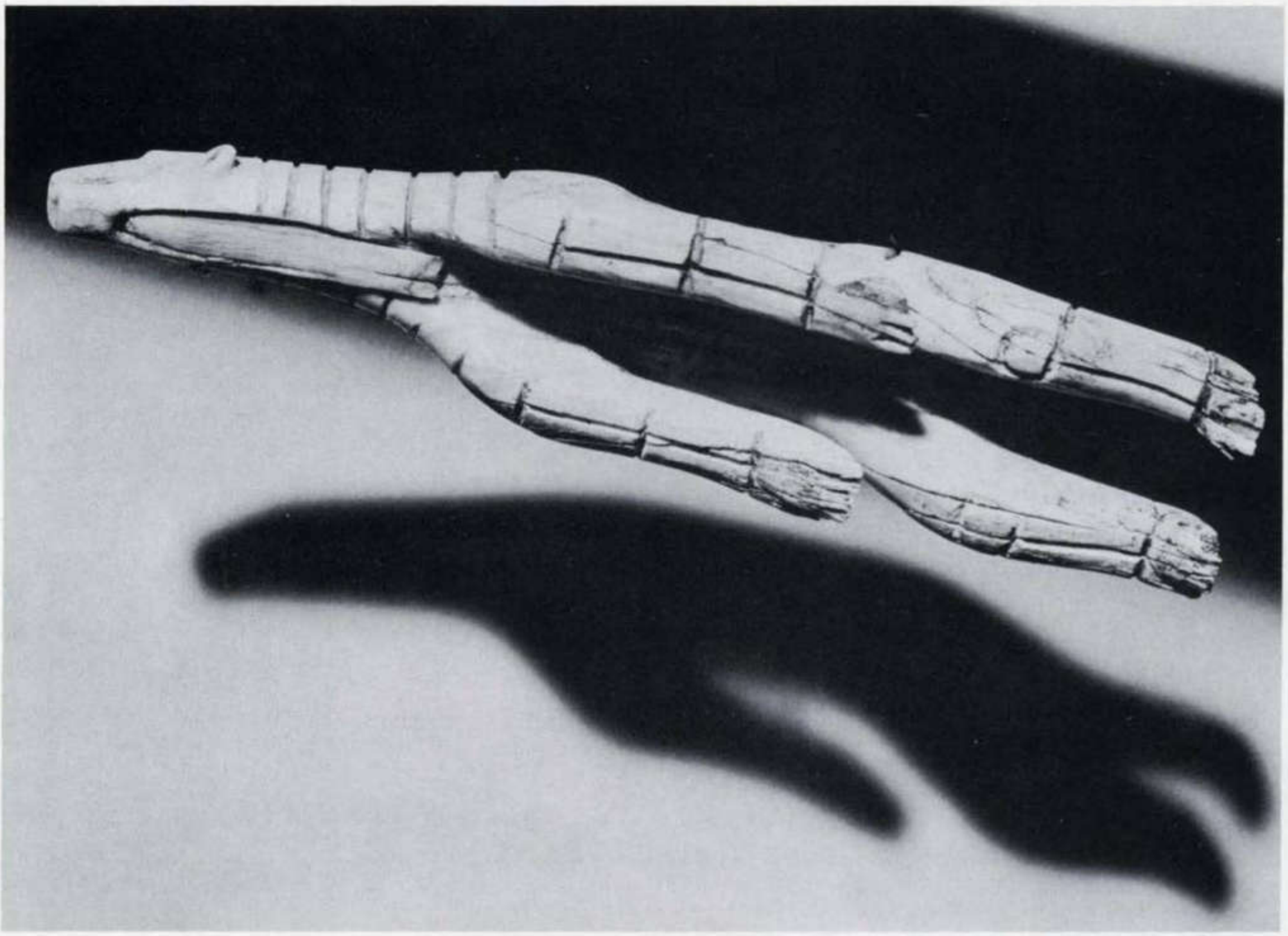
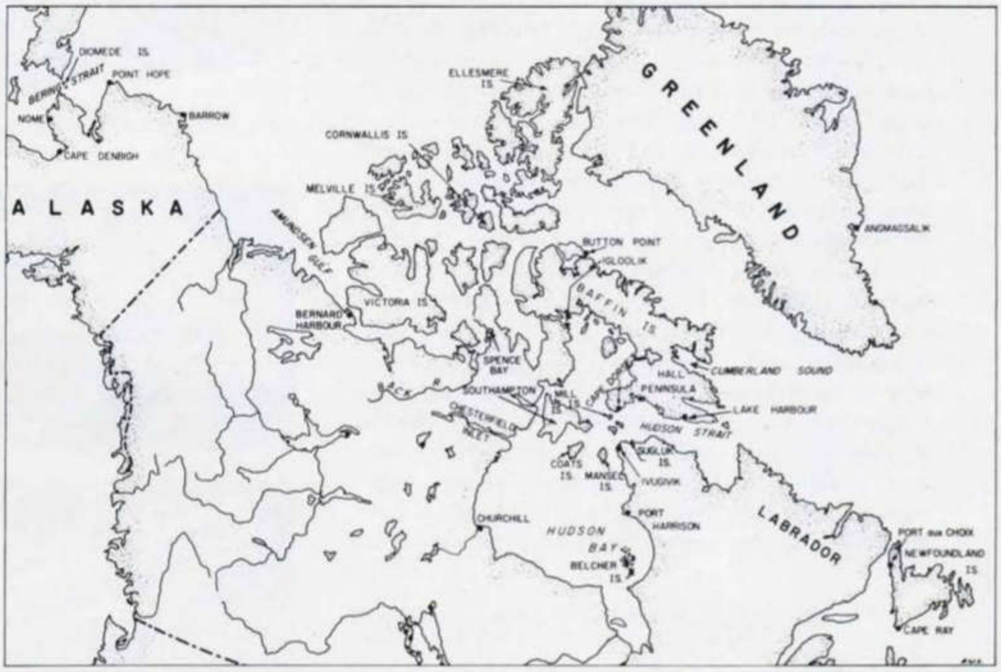


Fig. 1. Floating bear, ivory, from Alarnerk, Igloolik area, ↔ 6⅛". (except where mentioned all objects are ivory.)


DIOMEDE IS.
BERING STRAIT
POINT HOPE
NOME
BARROW
CAPE DENBIGH
ALASKA
ELLESMERE IS.
CORNWALLIS IS.
MELVILLE IS.
AMUNDSEN GULF
VICTORIA IS.
BERNARD HARBOUR
SPENCE BAY
BACK R.
SOUTHAMPTON
CHESTERFIELD INLET
CHURCHILL
GREENLAND
ANGMAGSALIK
BUTTON POINT
IGLOOLIK
BAFFIN IS.
CUMBERLAND SOUND
HALL PENINSULA
LAKE HARBOUR
MILL IS.
CAPE DORSET
HUDSON STRAIT
SUGLUK IS.
COATS IS.
MANSEL IS.
IVUGIVIK
PORT HARRISON
HUDSON BAY
BELCHER IS.
LABRADOR
PORT aux CHOIX
NEWFOUNDLAND IS.
CAPE RAY

land and Ungava. A culture stage, as yet best known in the Denbigh Flint complex, is the Alaskan parent culture of this population, and it probably existed there about 3,000 B.C. Radiocarbon dates suggest that the small, seasonally nomadic bands of Pre-Dorset hunters reached northeastern Greenland and Hudson Strait by 2,000 B.C. The second major stage, Dorset culture, reveals again thinly-scattered, small bands of hunters who moved with the seasons hunting seal, walrus, caribou, birds, and other game and who, like the tourists now, exploited the annual summer runs of char in arctic rivers. These hunters used skin tents in summer and, for winter, sheltered in small settlements of a few semi-subterranean huts. Toggling harpoons, barbed spears, chipped flint and rubbed slate tools, bone needles and adzes mark their remnant inventories. They probably made tailored fur clothing and skin boats and there is sound evidence for their having had small man-hauled sleds. Dorset culture has a rather different geographic distribution than Pre-Dorset although each covered a vast part of arctic North America: Pre-Dorset, coming from Alaska, reached at least as far south as Churchill, Manitoba, and to Mansel Island and Ivugivik in northwestern Quebec as well as to many points around the Greenland coast. Dorset is known as far west as Melville Island, Holman and Bernard Harbour, at several localities about Greenland and south to Cape Ray, the southwestern extremity of Newfoundland Island. Although found well down the east side of Hudson Bay, no Dorset sites are reported for the Bay's west coast south of Chesterfield Inlet.

It seems that in the centuries around 1,000 B.C. to 800 B.C. Pre-Dorset evolved into Dorset culture within the Canadian Central Arctic and very probably that change incorporated some ideas, some traits and techniques, diffused to the Dorset area from outside, possibly from Alaska, perhaps from the Barren Lands and perhaps, even, from prehistoric Indian cultures north of the Great Lakes and the St Lawrence River. Dorset, an Eskimo culture so far as we know, persisted until about A.D. 1300. It began to disappear shortly after A.D. 900 being replaced by Thule culture which occupies the third major stage of Canadian Eskimo archaeology. Thule was a fully Eskimo culture with an original homeland on the north Alaskan coast. It was carried eastward across the Canadian Arctic to Greenland and Labrador by a population spread that nearly obliterated Dorset culture except in an archaeological sense. Unlike Dorset, Thule hunters harvested the baleen whales using umiaks and an elaborate whaling harpoon gear and, in further contrast to Dorset, had dogs, dog-pulled sleds and sturdy winter houses often built partly of whale bones. Their art is much less impressive. The fourth stage, that of the

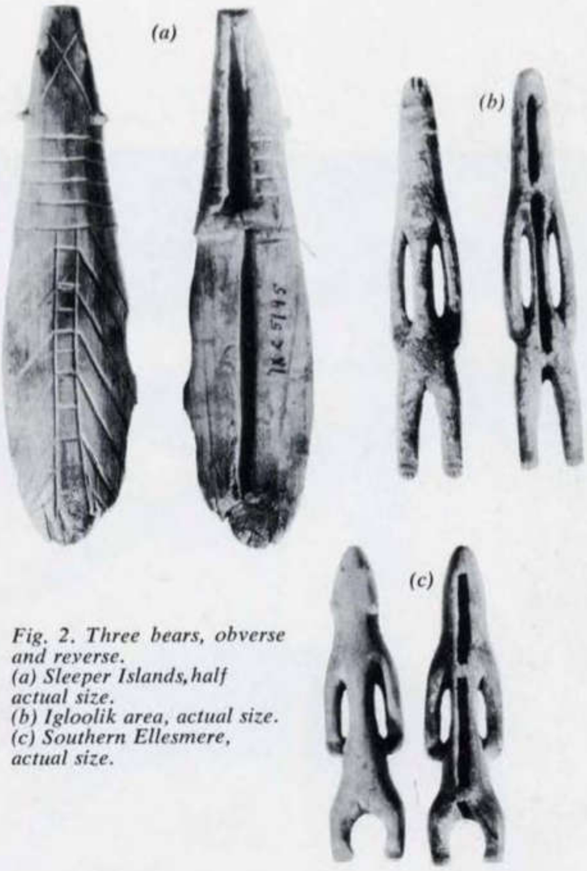


Fig. 2. Three bears, obverse and reverse.
(a) Sleeper Islands, half actual size.
(b) Igloolik area, actual size.
(c) Southern Ellesmere, actual size.

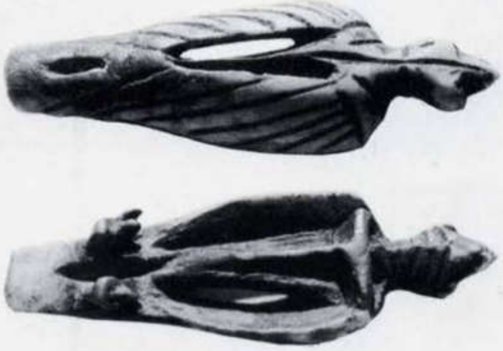


Fig. 3. Falcon from Igloolik area, ↔ 1⅝".

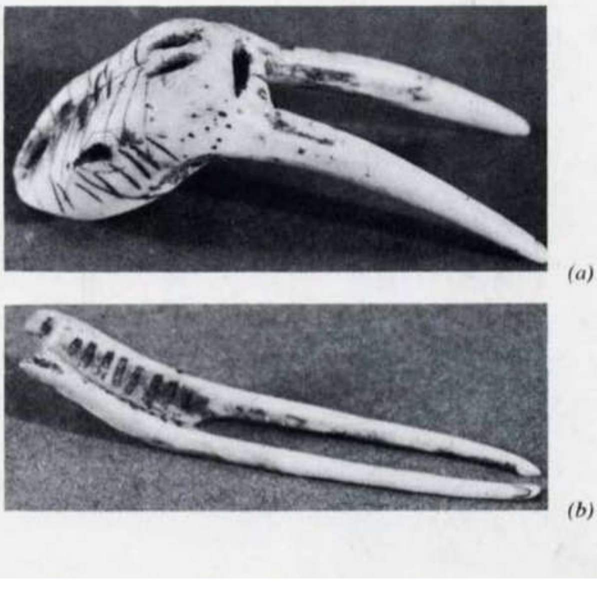


Fig. 4. Walrus heads, Igloolik area.
(a) 1⅝". (b) 1$\frac{11}{16}$".

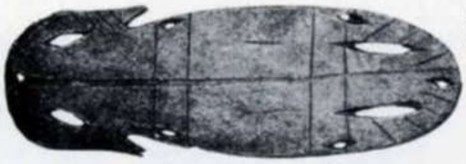


Fig. 5. Stylized seal from Port aux Choix-2, carbon dated c.A.D. 350, ↔ 3½".

compared with the greater artistic accomplishments of the Old Bering Sea and Ipiutak cultures, and with the wider distribution and the more general developments of Thule art. But there are more interesting comparisons to be made between Dorset and other art forms; before making them, I feel compelled to rush headlong into some sacred spheres of archaeological theories. I only hope that the dust raised will not obscure the ideas more than the dust which had settled on them.

One of these ideas is that there are no direct connections between the prehistoric Eskimo and the stone age art forms emanating from the Old World. I do not wish to imply here that Frederica de Laguna's "Comparison of Eskimo and Palaeolithic Art" has not been valid in relation to the major art objects she discussed. However, most of the important prehistoric Eskimo art styles were not yet known at the time she made her study which was largely based on Thule culture. The revision of de Laguna's theories is therefore long overdue and, in fact, might reveal the very Eskimo connections which she was originally forced to reject.

Furthermore, I believe (in varying degrees with Borden, Collins, Giddings, Laughlin, Meldgaard and Willey) that new comparisons could reveal the common ancestry of Okvik, Ipiutak, Dorset, ancient Aleut, as well as early northwest coast Indian art. I also believe such comparisons might well be undertaken with material already excavated, but not so far properly published, compared and correlated to date. Finally in this connection I believe that such new comparisons might convincingly explain the reason why Jørgen Meldgaard has so consistently picked up an Indian forest scent in his evaluations of Dorset culture. In Dorset art, this scent with its definite magico-religious flavour has more of a northwestern than a northeastern aroma, originating more likely from Eurasian rather than American woodland sources.

In any case, the major issue of this article is not Eskimo origins but a preliminary appreciation of Dorset art. My purpose in bringing in de Laguna's study based on art is to emphasize the need for reopening the discussion on this matter and to indicate the importance it might have on future evaluations of early arctic cultures in general, and on Eskimo origins in particular. For I am convinced that the art expressions of the earlier cultures indicate a greater coherence than do the various tool and weapon industries.

One might also reconsider Collins's (1961) assumption that in pre-Thule times "there was diversity rather than uniformity throughout the Eskimo area" and that this "was particularly true of art". He then elaborates with the statement that "although there are *stylistic resemblances* between Dorset and early Aleutian art, it is difficult to conceive of two art styles more different *in total appearance* than Dorset and *fully developed* Old Bering Sea" (the italics are mine).

As formulated, Collins's statement appears to be correct and, like de Laguna's argument, suggests a sense of finality that is difficult to refute. However, the two terms —"in total appearance" and "fully developed"—imply terminal conditions which, by definition, are farthest removed. Also, the term "stylistic resemblances" implies a relationship that is more extrinsic than intrinsic. And I wonder whether true cultural relationships could not be postulated on the more intrinsic resemblances of the various art forms (such as specific content and ideas) revealing perhaps common expressions evolving out of preceding common origins. That is, if such common "specific contents" could be found, could we then not see perhaps *intrinsic* rather than mere *stylistic* resemblances? For instance, might the identical use of skeleton motifs in differing styles (such as Ipiutak (Fig. 17), Dorset, and Angmagssalik) not be as significant as each particular (and differing) culture style which had developed locally or regionally?

If this were so, and I strongly believe it is—and so does Collins on several other occasions (as in 1951 and 1959), and so do Taylor and surely many other archaeologists—then it might not be wrong to speak about intellectual-spiritual origins, resemblances, and continuities—"culture echoes"—which are at least as meaningful as stylistic, typological, and chronological relationships. In this context, the early art forms of northwest Alaska and Dorset seem to me significantly interrelated first cousins or even brothers.

I wish to re-emphasize the need to study archaeological art from the point of view of content *and* form, rather than merely through form and style. The last two appear more accommodating in terms of readily discernible (and hence describable) characteristics, but the study of form and style alone tends to be misleading and needs to be validated by reference to content. Content precedes and almost determines form, even though it is essentially form that carries and expresses content and, in fact, transforms this content into art. In final analysis, however, the two are really inseparable, and "great" art always depends on an effective mutual relationship between them. Only in highly stylized and mannerist art does form precede content and become content itself.

recent Central Eskimo, can be said to date from the 18th century when Thule culture evolved into that of the Canadian Eskimo as met by 19th century explorers. The greatest differences between Thule and recent Eskimo centred on the loss of the baleen whaling, the consequently greater degree of nomadism, and a shrunken area of population distribution. Parenthetically, the Eskimos encountered by Martin Frobisher in 1576-77 were surely Thule culture Eskimos including the marksman whose arrow caught Sir Martin in the seat of his pants. Conversely, the Skraelings' traces seen by Eirik the Red in southwest Greenland and some met by his followers in Vinland were probably Dorset culture people. Later, Thule people in western Greenland left sites in which Danish archaeologists have found many and clear signs of Viking influence on the old, local Eskimo way of life.

The raw data for this review of Dorset art consist of 56 specimens from the National Museum of Canada collections and 33 loaned by the Oblate Museum in Churchill. In addition, we were very generously provided photographs of Newfoundland specimens by Elmer Harp, Lake Harbour area pieces by Moreau Maxwell and Igloolik area pieces by Jørgen Meldgaard. Further, we used illustrations of 36 objects in the Dorset literature as follows: for Cornwallis and Southampton Islands (Collins, 1950, 1955, 1956, 1957); for the Thule district (Holtved, 1944); for the Foxe Basin-North Baffin region—Mathiassen (1927). The total then is 125 Dorset objects, excluding decorated bits and carved fragments too small for adequate identification. As these objects are spread over

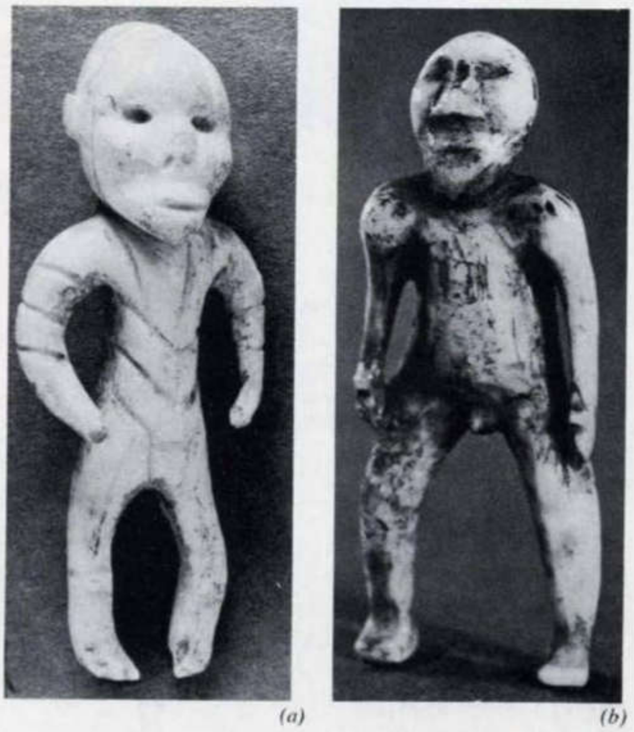


Fig. 6. Male figures, (a) Southampton Island, actual size, (b) Igloolik area, ↕ 1½".

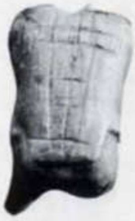


Fig. 7. Dressed torso Pelly Bay area, ↕ 1 1/16".

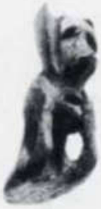


Fig. 8. Human figure with collar, Mill Island, ↕ 1".

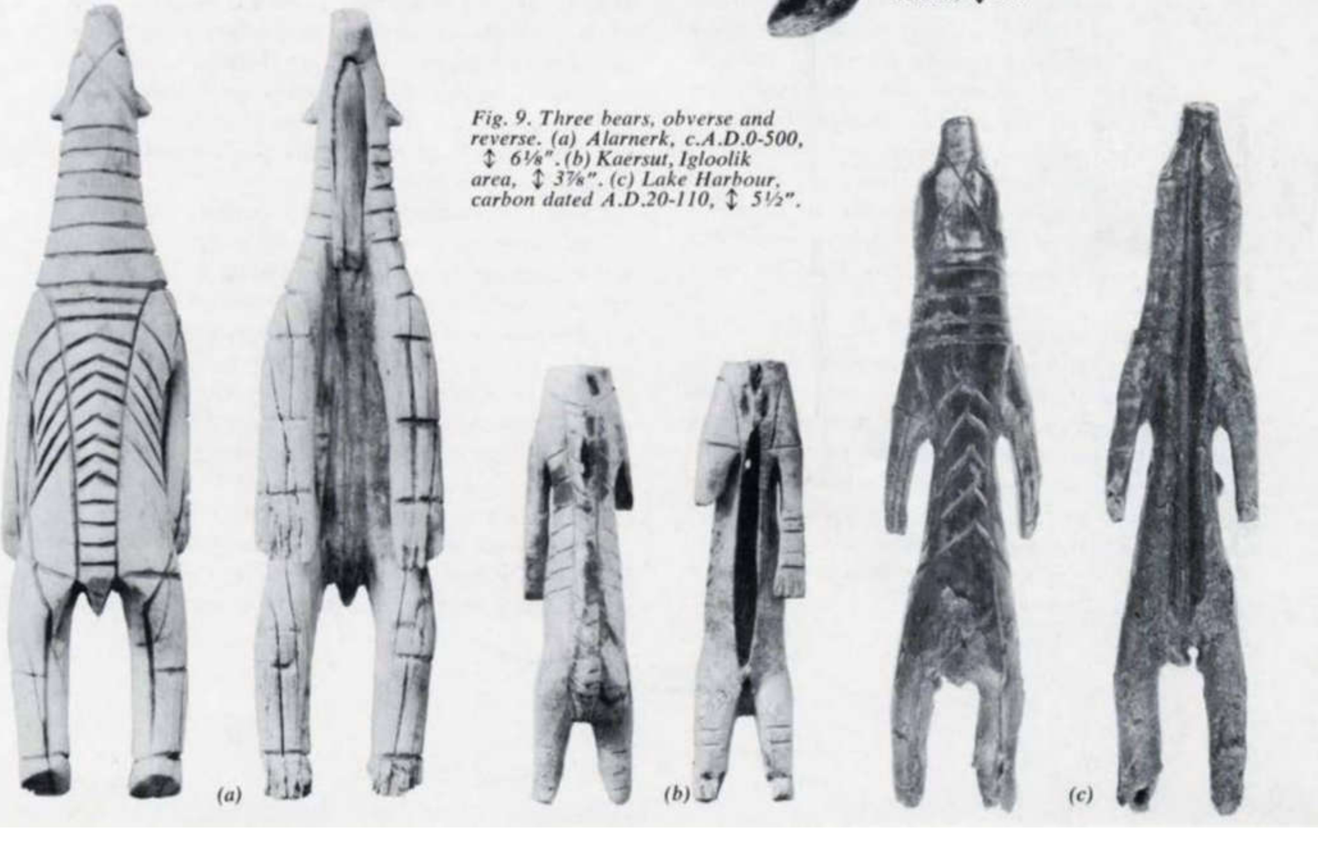


Fig. 9. Three bears, obverse and reverse. (a) Alarnerk, c.A.D.0-500, ↕ 6⅛". (b) Kaersut, Igloolik area, ↕ 3⅞". (c) Lake Harbour, carbon dated A.D.20-110, ↕ 5½".

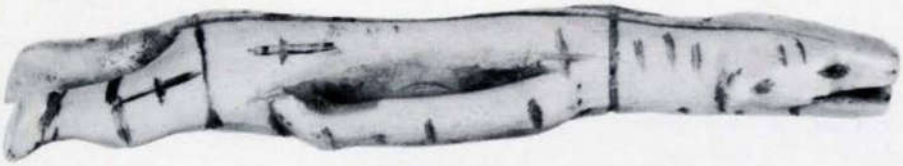


Fig. 10. Bear, Igoolik(?), ↔ 2½".

In Dorset art, content and form appear in perfect balance: the significance of content is convincingly expressed through very dynamic form; the strength and vitality of form is derived from spiritual and magical motivations. Understanding the one might lead therefore to appreciation of the other; and, of course, vice versa.

In the beginning of these notes I mentioned the intensity and power which Dorset art exudes despite its small size, subtlety and delicacy. Taylor touches on the geographical distribution on several occasions and also gives a count of motifs which we consider very significant.

When we looked at our specimens at first, we were naturally influenced by the well-worn notions that every Eskimo had great abilities as craftsman (equated with artist) and that, since every Eskimo knew how to, and had to, produce his own weapons, tools and utensils by carving, flaking, scraping or shaping otherwise, art too was a universally practiced activity. I now have to reject this notion completely on the evidence before me. To begin with, the amount of art objects, as compared with utilitarian objects, in Dorset culture is absolutely and relatively small. Also, hardly any of the utilitarian objects are decorated (and in this regard Dorset culture differs significantly from all other contemporaneous Eskimo cultures, but seems to relate more to the earlier cultures preceding the first millenium B.C.). The few objects which *are* decorated, are either non-utilitarian or the decoration is symbolic and magical rather than decorative.

These statements require additional substantiation. Many "fully developed" Eskimo cultures contain distinct art styles which are applied to (and sometimes superimposed on) most objects for purposes of both magic and decoration. I certainly would not wish to draw a dividing line and, in fact, am convinced that both magic and decoration overlap so often and so deeply that they are almost inseparable: decoration is used to express and enhance magic, and magical thoughts are often contained —consciously or sub-consciously—in decorative motifs and devices. But this is not quite so with Dorset art.

The significantly small number of art objects excavated to date makes me believe that Dorset art is so rare because it had a very special meaning. That is, most "graven images" were specifically used for magical purposes and not for decoration. We know from a fragmentary carving (Fig. 7) that Dorset people knew embellished clothing (although I suspect that this unique fragment too indicates a special occasion!); all other, very few, allusions to clothing refer only to the use of a simple collar (Fig. 8 and p 55, No. 3). The weapons and tools are beautifully and carefully shaped but not decorated. The few utensils that are decorated are mostly of unknown use and, concluding from the nature of their design and their relation to designs of ostensibly magical purposes, they most likely are objects of supernatural or mystical import.

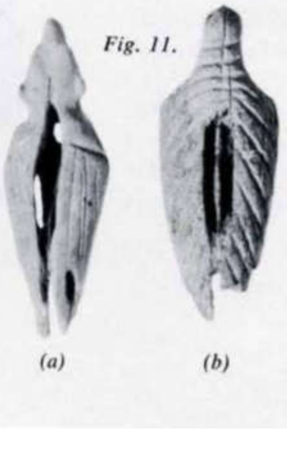
A distinction must be made here between ceremonial or ritual objects on one side and purely magical (but non-ritual and non-ceremonial) objects, such as amulets, on the other. These two types are easily and often confused. The nature of the Eskimo amulet has been well defined by Rasmussen (1931): ". . . it is the spirit of the object, the spirit of the owl, the swan, the ptarmigan, that come to one's aid when that which symbolizes it is worn on the body. Thus the owl's claw, the swan's bill, the ptarmigan's foot, etc., are only characteristic symbols of the power that lives in the spirit of the particular animal."

An amulet, therefore, is a personal and private magical object that protects the wearer, endows him with special qualities, and enables him to propitiate the necessary spirits who enable him to live life more successfully. In recent times, amulets were frequently parts of actual

Fig. 11. Falcons (a) from Mill Island, ↕ 1⅞", (b) from Mansel Island, ↕ 1¾".

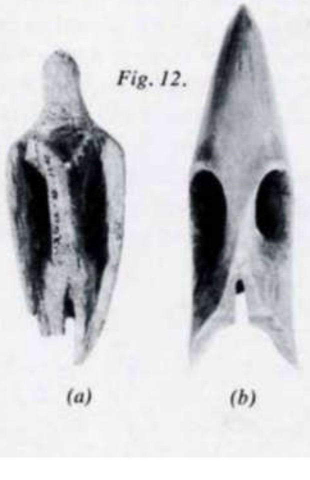
Fig. 12. (a) Reverse of 11(b), Mansel Island, (b) harpoon head from Tyara Site (Sugluk) ↕ 2⅜".

Fig. 11.



(a) (b)

Fig. 12.



(a) (b)

about one million square miles you will realize this paper is on rather thin ice. That reflects a basic problem—that much of the data is still unpublished. The major geographic sources of these data are Button Point, Igloolik area, Newfoundland and the general region of Hudson Strait and Mansel Island. The remainder are scattered occurrences from the Dorset area.

To establish a crude idea of frequencies I took nine simple and obvious categories of subject matter by which to classify the 89 specimens on hand and the 36 illustrated in the literature (at that time I had not got my colleagues' photos). As one specimen sometimes had two or more subjects, those 125 objects gave 151 subject matter classifications. No less than 52, a full third, are human depictions—figurines, part figurines, faces, and maskettes. Thirty, or 20 per cent show bears. Then, in order of frequency are 19 seals of all sorts, 16 birds and 15 walrus—that is 13 per cent seals, 11 per cent birds and 10 per cent walrus. The remaining 11 per cent include six examples of caribou, four of fish, three of weasel, and six unclassified. Clearly, people and sea mammals predominate and, excluding human depictions, bears are pre-eminent. Many things, including insect life, vegetation and structures, seem absent and curved line decoration is very rare. I need hardly add that the art is very small scale, sometimes precisely realistic, sometimes stylized or abstracted and often only a depiction of a part such as a head or a hoof. The materials are customarily antler and ivory or wood and less frequently bone; soapstone is quite rare. Incised line ornamentation is a common quality.

Geographic continuity or cultural consistency over the vast area involved is reflected in the occurrence of closely similar specimens at places hundreds of miles apart. For example, a snowy owl from Igloolik (Fig. 14) has a near-twin from Mill Island, 400 miles distant. Ivory spatulas with a bear's head and incised line ornament and also face clusters (Fig. 28) in low relief on an antler fragment both have a wide distribution in Canada and occur in Greenland. A very distinctive ivory bear figure with excised underside (Fig. 2) occurs about Igloolik and on southern Ellesmere Island, some 500 miles distant. The falcon figurine (Fig. 3), known from Mill Island, Mansel Island and Igloolik, appears again in northwestern Greenland, some 1,100 air miles from Mansel Island. Little carvings of a walrus head without mandible (Fig. 4) come from the Igloolik area, Mansel Island and Port Harrison area, a spread of 750 air miles.

So-called needle cases (Fig. 20), made from the proximal end of a tusk and characterized by stylized human facial depictions and a distinctive walrus motif occur from Mansel Island to Ellesmere Island. I think these things

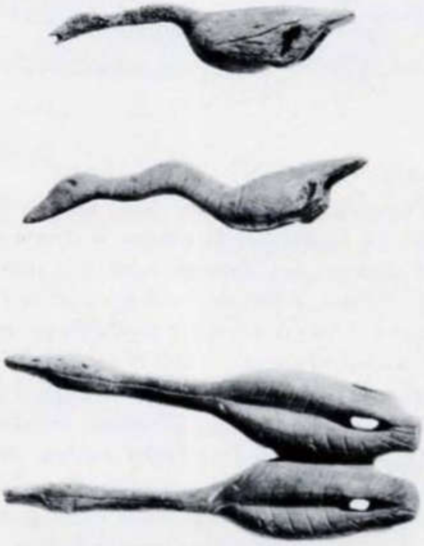


Fig. 13. Group of swans, Mansel Island, shown actual size.

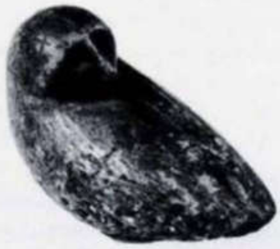


Fig. 14. Snowy owl, Igloolik area, actual size.

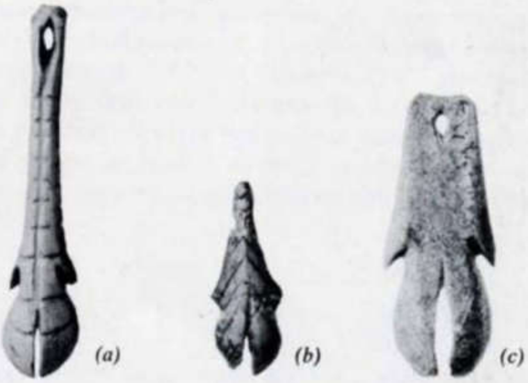


Fig. 15. Caribou hoofs. (a) and (b) from Abverdjar, Igloolik area, (c) Mansel Island, all actual size.

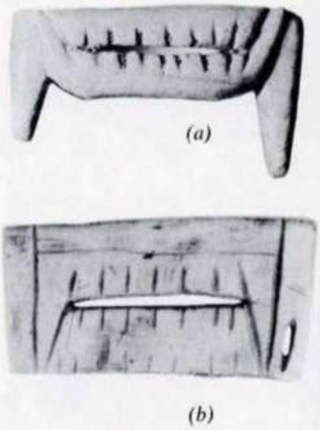


Fig. 16. Shaman's teeth. (a) Alarnerk site, Igloolik area, ↔ 2⅛", (b) Button Point, ↔ 1¾".

animals and, less frequently, carved charms and pendants.

Ritual or ceremonial objects, on the other hand, are usually "professional" equipment, used by those who engage in the social activity of "taking charge of the relations to the supernatural powers that are supposed to interfere with human life" on behalf of social groups, from individual to family, village, and tribe. I obviously refer here to shaman's equipment and I am reasonably convinced that most, if not all, Dorset art is not only magical, but probably highly specialized (and "professional") shaman's art. There are of course exceptions, but I am not sure that, eventually, these could not be explained (or hypothesized) as part of shamanic cult art as well.

In this connection, we should also like to suggest that the highly developed and exquisitely shaped objects are not the work of occasional carvers, far less mere whittlings, but the carefully planned and considered work of specialists (either the shamans or their helpers), who knew the traditions of form as well as of content, and who applied them in a carefully handed down traditional manner. It is by no means unreasonable to conceive of a Dorset artist-shaman (or a shaman-artist) as the main producer of such art.

As shaman's art, the consistent recurrence of specific subject matter and motifs over so large an area and so long a time can be more readily understood. If I am not mistaken in my assumptions I can also imagine that Dorset art arises in an old religious tradition in the ancestral Denbigh complex, as Taylor suggests; that it has disseminated from a single original idea with a distinctive core and a formalized (albeit orally transmitted) system handed down through Dorset times for roughly two thousand years! I might add that it is within the tradition of a so definitely structured shaman's cult that I see some of the firmer relations with the earlier, or the contemporaneous, Alaskan cultures despite their stylistic differences. This idea, in turn, provokes the assumption of the common cultural ancestor.

The question now arises, what are the elements of the Dorset shaman's art? In view of Meldgaard's great interest in Eskimo art in general and Dorset art in particular, and also in view of his important excavations of the extensive Dorset sites in the Igloolik district from which so much of Dorset art has come, it seems appropriate to start with his so characteristic bear from the Alarnerk site (Fig. 1). This bear has been described as having been "portrayed in the act of swimming, possibly in flight" and has been dated at around A.D. 500, i.e., from the Middle Dorset period. It is well known as one of the outstanding pieces of Dorset art. While I am convinced that it is that in terms of its magnificence and impressiveness as a work of art, I am less convinced that, in its usual manner of interpretation and dating, it gives us the proper key to the real scope of Dorset art.

I do not believe that this piece, as indeed almost any of the other ornamented animal and bird carvings, has much to do with hunting magic as such (see p 46), but that it was part of a shaman's magical equipment, to help him embark on "spirit flights" to visit the spirits, spirit helpers, or deities, in order to consult with them: to seek information from them about offences against them or their taboos; to appease them; or to invoke their help to overcome adverse conditions. Rasmussen continuously refers to such shamanic practices, as do Thalbitzer, Hawkes, Turner and, more recently, Holtved.

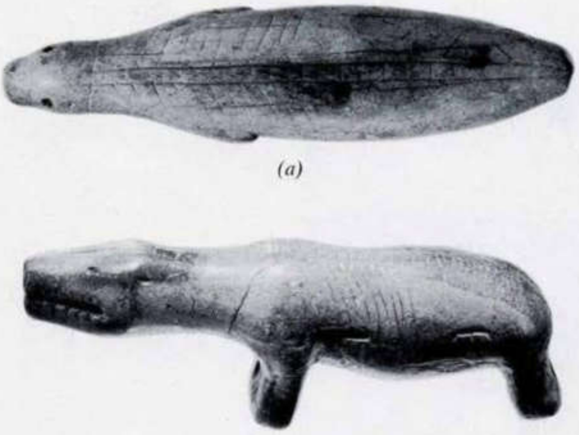
In all these studies, reference is made to the bear as a helping spirit, in fact, the greatest helping spirit of all; as he (the Greenland *Tôrnârssuḳ* or *Tôrnârtiḳ*) who gives power to the shaman and provides him with helping spirits; and to "bears in human forms who are the shaman's best helpers". It is the helping spirits who assist the shaman to withdraw "the spirit from his body and thus undertake the great 'spirit flights' through space and through the sea". The shaman "must procure these helping spirits for himself; he must meet them in person and they should preferably be animals in human form". To me, these helping spirits are embodied in the Dorset animal carvings which the shaman dangled from his hands, neck, belt or shoulder strap, or carried in special bags and containers, to have them "handy" at all times, for being without them is not being a shaman.

are shaman utensil boxes. Grotesque or realistic little carvings of people (Figs. 6, 8) come from northwest Greenland, Cornwallis Island, Mill Island, and Igloolik. A few, carved wood fragments of human faces found on Victoria and southern Baffin Islands and Greenland are remarkably similar in their depiction and decoration to others from Button Point.

These observations should suffice to indicate the broadly-spread commonality of Dorset art. I expect that future work will not only reinforce it but also that it will indicate regional variations. Temporal variation is another sizable question.

I think all workers would agree that Newfoundland Dorset appears to be a regional variant of the culture and probably of its art (Fig. 5). Harp's Port aux Choix-2 site produced a bear figurine comparable to specimens from Sugluk Island, two tabular carvings reminiscent of others from Mansel Island and a high percentage of bear depictions.

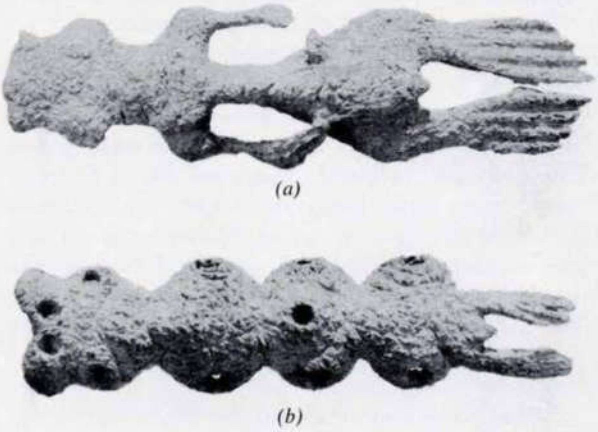
Extending the geographic compass of comparisons, one quickly sees that Dorset art echoes in certain aspects and objects the art of the Okvik and Ipiutak (Figs. 17, 18) cultures. Those two prehistoric Alaskan Eskimo cultures, far to the west about Bering Strait and dating between 400 B.C. and A.D. 400, are not, so far as is known, directly related to Dorset, but similarities between their art and Dorset art do suggest at least an indirect connection. The parallels are *not* broad and abundant, nor are they generally in style or technique. Rather, certain objects are conceptually alike and occasionally a distinctive design or form is shared. For example, the little carving of a caribou hoof (Fig. 15) in Dorset also appears in Ipiutak. Some of Harp's Newfoundland seal-shaped objects recall a distinctive Ipiutak specimen. Wooden face masks from Button Point and the so-called shaman's teeth (Fig. 16) from various localities have parallels in Ipiutak grave masks and mouth-covers. The distinctive design on a Dorset bear reappears on a bear and on several strikingly similar seal (Fig. 17) carvings from Ipiutak. The Sugluk Island Tyara site bears (Fig. 21) recall a Siberian specimen (Fig. 22) figured by Rudenko and Ipiutak objects



(a)

(b)

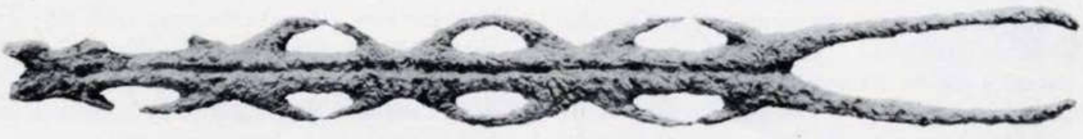
Fig. 17. (a) Seal, Ipiutak, Point Hope, ↔ 4¼", (b) Bear, Ipiutak, Point Hope, ↔ 4".



(a)

(b)

Fig. 18. Man-seal images, Ipiutak, Point Hope, (a) ↔ 6", (b) ↔ 5⅞", (c) ↔ 10".



(c)

Rasmussen (1929) tells of yet another task required of the shaman so that the helping spirits "would think it worth while to come to him: *he must be able to see himself as a skeleton*". He must "divest his body of his flesh and blood so that nothing remains but his bones. And he must then name all the parts of his body, mention every single bone by name; and in so doing, he must not use ordinary human speech, but only the special and sacred shaman's language which he has learned from his instructor. By thus seeing himself naked, altogether freed from the perishable and transient flesh and blood, he consecrates himself in the sacred tongue of the shamans, to his great task, through that part of his body which will longest withstand the action of sun, wind and weather, after he is dead."

Perhaps the skeleton design (Figs. 9, 10, 13) really *is* the skeleton: not the inner forms projected X-ray like to the surface to create a more complete animal, but symbolic form to represent a more spiritual being, a lasting being, a helping spirit to provide supernatural power.

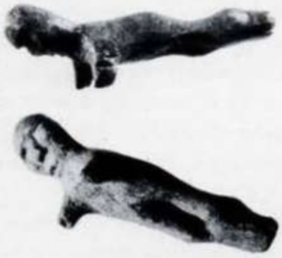


Fig. 19. Two views of man-seal figure from Nuvuk Island off Ivugivik 1-3/8".

Furthermore the ever-recurring trough-like hollows or grooves in bears, walrus heads, and birds might well represent the discarded perishable flesh, and the remaining strong structural form with the abstracted skeletal designs would then represent the imperishable spirit or soul. This also could account for the peculiar linear abstractions that are not skeletons proper, but a metaphoric use of skeleton-like design elements as symbols of permanence.

There are however some additional—simultaneous and ambivalent—meanings. For instance, the skeleton designs (Fig. 9) recall Siberian and Aleutian "dismemberment" practices concerning "the preservation of power of a body even though dead". Related practices (which incidentally were also observed by many Indian tribes) required the dismemberment of one's victims at the joints, for one's protection against the evil power of the victims' spirits, as well as against the infliction of joint diseases, such as arthritis, brought on by hostile spirits through the neglect of certain taboos. In the Aleutians, dismemberments can also be associated with "joint bindings"—both entailing therapeutic and prophylactic magic.

I see in the Dorset emphasis on certain linear markings (Fig. 10)—joints expressed by deep lines and the not infrequent presence of crosses and X-es at joints, hips, shoulder blades, neck and head—the simultaneous use of preventive (prophylactic) magic *in addition* to the previously mentioned sympathetic (propitiatory) functions. Such magic would have been employed against the potentially evil powers of specific spirits portrayed and objectified in each carving. This would be particularly true of the bear who was held in great esteem as spirit helper, but whose awesome evil powers would at the same time implant even greater fear. Ambivalent measures to invoke the spirit world and measures to guard oneself against it were therefore always needed simultaneously. Similarly, though they were essential to individual and community as helpers and mediators, the shamans could really never be trusted completely. Their supernatural powers, however exalted, also provoked suspicion and fear, hence there always existed the need to protect oneself and the community against them even after their death.

With regard to the magical aspects mentioned above, I am almost certain that the wooden human figures from Button Point (Fig. 30) described by Taylor (and indeed the zoomorphic carvings from there too) do not simply imply hunting or similar sympathetic magic, but should be considered protection against animal spirits and against humans (or shamans) that "had to be killed". In other words, the Button Point material, with its strong shamanic flavour, including the rare life-size mask fragments so reminiscent of "important" Ipiutak burial practices, gives further weight to my artist-shaman hypothesis. For I cannot imagine that such magically potent works could have possibly been executed by anyone else but a shaman or his helper, and it seems to me that the "skeletal-markings," which are so conspicuously a design characteristic on so large a percentage of Dorset art, cannot really be anything else than magical symbols. Nor can I imagine that magical symbols were applied to anything by anybody other than one who is thoroughly familiar with magic and its powerful effects. Magic is not something with which to fool around.

Since this study is merely a preliminary statement on Dorset art, I cannot afford the luxury of describing more characteristics in detail.

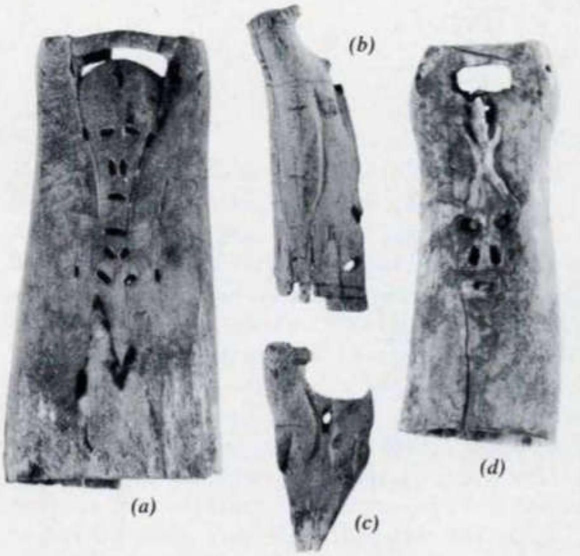


Fig. 20. Shaman utensils, four fragments, ivory or bone, (a) southern Ellesmere Island, ↕ 4⅛", (b) Mansel Island, ↕ 2⅞", (c) Mansel Island, ↕ 1⅞", (d) Igloolik (?) or Maxwell Bay (?), ↕ 3⅝".

from Port Hope. Antler tubes with schematic faces in Ipiutak recall the Dorset shaman utensil boxes. Ipiutak art also includes animal monsters and especially notable is the man-seal combination (Fig. 18, from Larsen and Rainey, 1948, Pl. 53) which recalls Dorset objects from the Churchill Museum (probably Igloolik area) and the Nuvuk Islands off Ivugivik (Fig. 19). De Laguna (1932-3) and Collins (1951 and 1959) earlier illustrated the similarity in linear incised ornamentation between Button Point pieces and objects from the Aleutian Islands.

Even with less data available, several anthropologists have noted similarities between Dorset and such Alaskan cultures as Okvik and Ipiutak. Sadly, it is easier to note these parallels than to comprehend their archaeological significance. Yet, the question taunts one, perhaps most of all in the art objects. In temporal perspective Dorset art is earlier than, contemporary with, and younger than its Alaskan relatives; therefore, Dorset art cannot be derived directly from Okvik or Ipiutak although some of the individual attributes of later Dorset may have been borrowed from Alaska. *Second,* as Dorset culture remains unknown west of Amundsen Gulf there is a vast geographic gap between the known Dorset area and that of Okvik and Ipiutak. Until that gap is known, we cannot postulate a route of cultural diffusion from Alaska to the Dorset area. *Third,* we know nearly nothing of Pre-Dorset art although Pre-Dorset was the parent from which Dorset culture evolved. Further, we yet know nearly nothing of the Alaskan art antecedents of Okvik and Ipiutak although it has been argued that Ipiutak art shows strong influence from the Scytho-Siberian animal art style. Nor is the relation of Okvik or Ipiutak to the much older Alaskan Denbigh Flint complex clear. In short, a lack of pertinent data chases us up a tree. The discomforts of such a perch provoke speculation. Mine follows: there is general agreement that Pre-Dorset culture was brought to Canada about 2500 B.C. by migration of descendants of the Denbigh Flint complex. *If Dorset art, like the bulk of Dorset culture, grew out of Pre-Dorset, then there surely must have been an ancestral art form in Denbigh Flint complex.* As there is some manner of cultural continuity over the 2,000 years from the Denbigh to Ipiutak perhaps, then, Ipiutak art is the final Alaskan culmination of an art tradition nurtured by Denbigh hunters. If these too-facile explanations be approximately correct, then the parallels between old Alaskan and Dorset art would be explainable by their having had a common ancestry in the Denbigh Flint complex and its religious art. *If* that were sustained, then there are further customary speculations to explain the abundant differences between Dorset and Ipiutak art. For example, from Denbigh through Pre-Dorset to Dorset, there would have been many centuries for the art tradition to have developed *in situ* in the *relative* isolation of the central and eastern arctic while Ipiutak and its progenitors were absorbing influences from Asian centres.

Turning from these informal speculations on form one stumbles into brambles—that is, the vital question of *function.* What were the purposes of these Dorset art pieces? In his attractive book (1960), Meldgaard, like others, suggests that some were purely for entertainment and others for magic, probably hunting magic. In a similar vein I have suggested that some were amulets worn to protect the wearer or to impart to him some desired quality of the original. Perhaps a caribou hoof amulet made the wearer quick-footed, or a weasel amulet gave alertness and so forth.

Bernard Saladin d'Anglure (1962; Taylor 1962) discovered multiple depictions of human faces cut into the surfaces of soapstone outcrops in the general region of Wakeham Bay on the south side of Hudson Strait. These

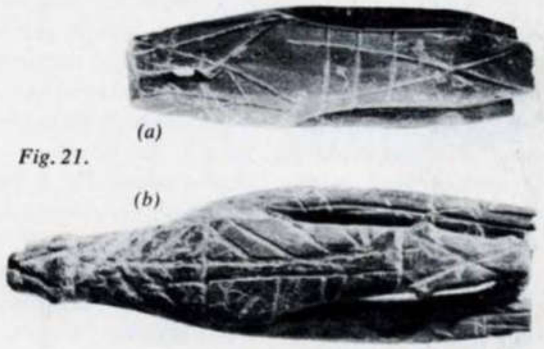


Fig. 21.

Fig. 21. Bears from shaman's kit, Tyara Site, Sugluk, (a) ↔ 1⅝", (b) ↔ 2¹⁄₁₆"

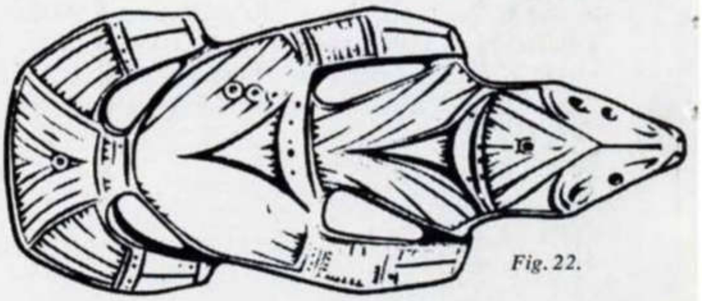


Fig. 22.

Fig. 22. Bear from Uelen, Siberia, ↔ 2¾".

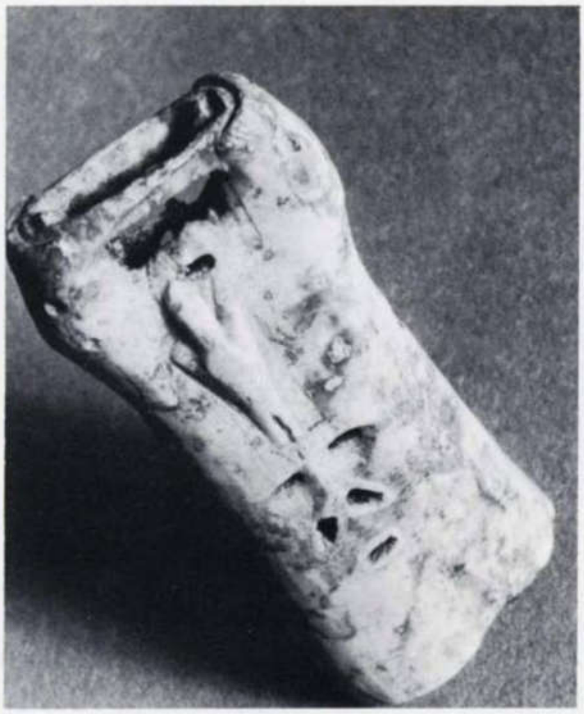


Fig. 23. Shaman's tube, another view of Fig. 20 (d), the sort of object often called a 'needle case'.

I could discuss, for instance, the open mouth in almost all of the bear figures, a tradition that I have recently observed to exist (or persist) in contemporary Canadian Eskimo carvings in several areas (such as Arctic Bay, Povungnituk and Repulse Bay) and in a doll(?) from Eskimo Point. The open mouth of the shamanic "bear-human" obviously refers to the expression *ani'ḳsa'tuḳ*—he breathes, relating to *ani'nit*—the soul, and to the *angaḳok* (the spirit man), the shaman who on his "spirit journey" has assumed the soul form—the permanent form of being.

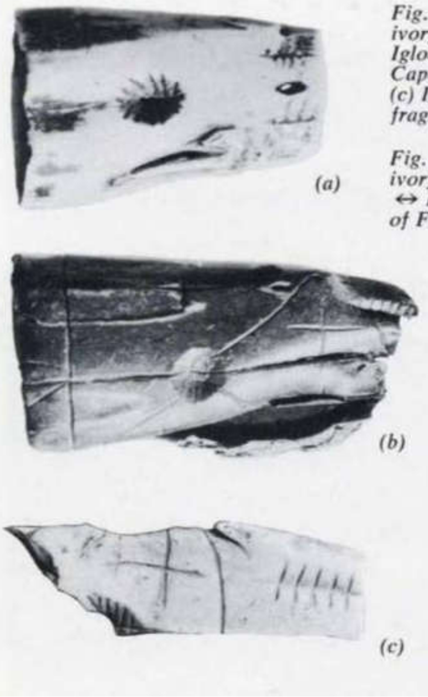
And then there is the formerly mentioned trough-like groove or longitudinal slit (Figs. 2 and 9), an interior shape that is hollowed out but that contains air—breath and spirit itself. I am not convinced that the "secret compartments" of some of the shamanic bear-humans contained much more than the longitudinal "openings"; their design makes me think that their purpose was "to divest the body of flesh and blood". I can well imagine that they were kept "empty" or that any additions would have been symbolic extensions (or fortifications) of the idea of "containing" the potentially evil powers of the spirits. (The red stains on some might then represent the divested blood.)

Of the birds, one should first list the falcon (Fig. 3) as a potent helping spirit and, in this regard, the falcon body with bear head from Mill Island (Fig. 11) becomes a particularly powerful helper. One might also note here the great similarity of the skeletal bird shape to the powerfully expressed medial crest shape of the classical Dorset harpoon head in Figure 12.

In addition to showing a few selected water birds in Figure 13, all with abstract linear markings, I must draw attention to a "charming" snowy owl (Fig. 14) from the Igloolik area. This owl (with its typical gouged-out suspension hole in the tail, hanging upside-down to be readily brought into an upright position by lifting it like a pendant watch) displays seven engraved crosses—three on its body and four on its head. I might add that I did not make a general count of crosses (as opposed to the very much rarer X-es) but after becoming aware of the recurrence of the crosses their appearance on a great many carvings was not exactly a surprise.

Perhaps most interesting in this regard was their almost unfailing appearance on tubes, containers, and fragments thereof, regardless of whether these were decorated or

Fig. 24.



(a)

(b)

(c)

Fig. 24. Sucking tubes, ivory or bone, (a) Igloolik, ↔ 1⅝", (b) Cape Dorset (?), ↔ 2¼", (c) Igloolik area, fragment, ↔ 2".

Fig. 25. Sucking tube, ivory or bone, Igloolik, ↔ 1⅝", different views of Fig. 24 (a).

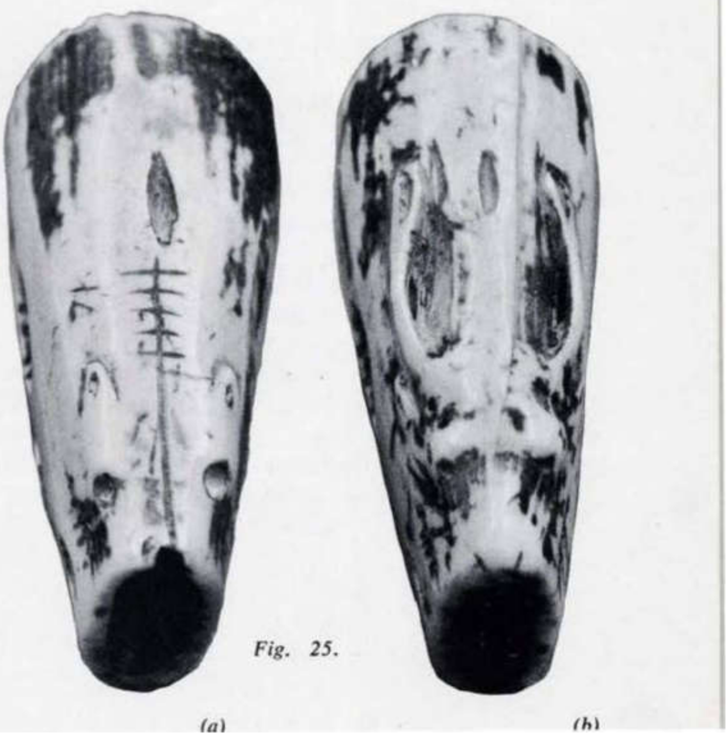


Fig. 25.

(a)

(b)

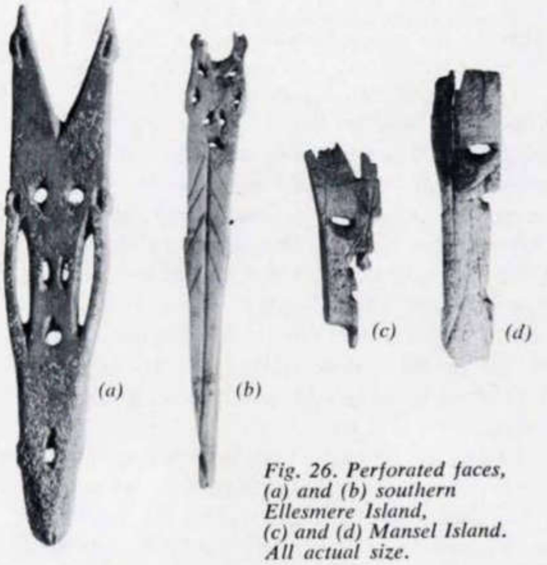


Fig. 26. Perforated faces, (a) and (b) southern Ellesmere Island, (c) and (d) Mansel Island. All actual size.

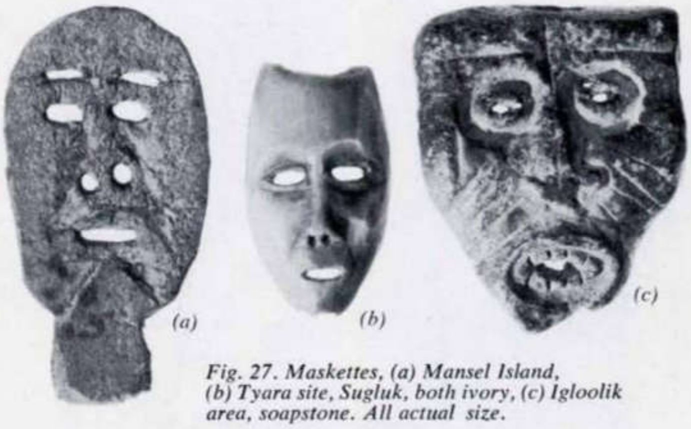
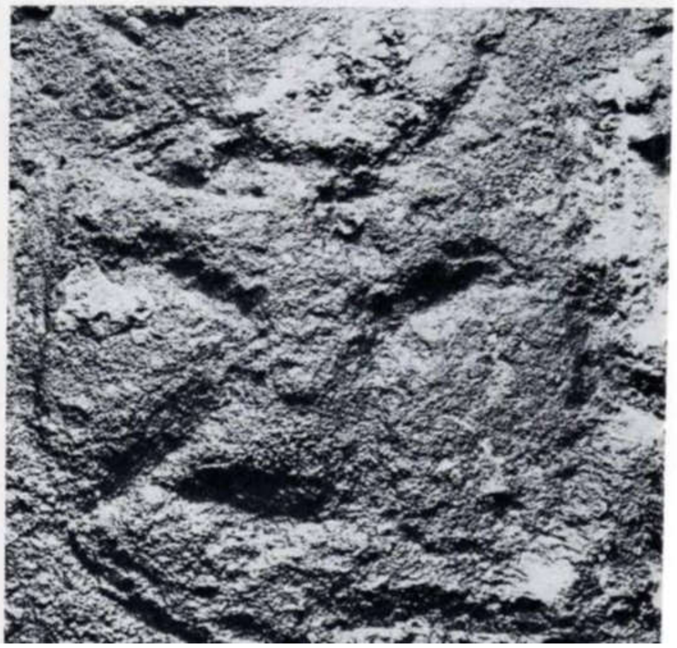


Fig. 27. Maskettes, (a) Mansel Island, (b) Tyara site, Sugluk, both ivory, (c) Igloolik area, soapstone. All actual size.

petroglyphs (Fig. 28a), occurring at only a very few localities, are not known elsewhere in arctic America. They are definitely of Dorset culture and these faces, none in profile, remind us of the clusters of faces cut into antler or ivory fragments by Dorset carvers. Indeed, even an archaeologist might wonder if these petroglyph sites mark places of special supernatural consequence for Dorset culture residents of that area; are these depictions of dead people and are there graves nearby? Do they copy masks worn by shamans? I find it almost impossible to believe these petroglyphs were only for decoration or amusement. Although I cannot document it, I expect they, and most if not all Dorset art, were concerned with supernatural matters—with shamanism, burial practices, sympathetic magic.

Strongly convinced that much of Dorset art was closely tied to shamanism, I assume that many pieces belonged in shamans' kits as depictions of spirit helpers. In these respects one finds many lurking hints in the ethnographic record. Noting the rather thin but thick-necked bears of Dorset art, one may recall Holm's noting (1914), for 19th century Angmagssalik, that the so-called angakok or shaman bear was recognized in carvings by its thick neck and thin body. Indeed, Angmagssalik ethnography leads one to the working hypothesis that Angmagssalik culture was a late isolated Dorset expression that absorbed Thule overlay after Dorset had ceased to exist in arctic Canada. Remembering the so-called "skeletal motif" so common to Dorset art there is Rasmussen's (1929) note on the Igloolik shaman's needing to be able "to see himself as a skeleton" and his naming each bone in the *sacred* shaman's language.

The high percentage of bear motifs in Dorset art recalls the West Greenlandic bear-figure *Tôrnârssuḳ* known as "the master of the helping spirits" and who gave the shamans "power" and provided them with helping spirits. In East Greenland we have the mystic bear again as *Tôrnârtiḳ*, the most prominent helping spirit. In the Central Arctic the bear was generally regarded as a particularly strong helping spirit. Again in East Greenland, the falcon plays a significant role in shamanism and several such birds are known in Dorset art. Leaving these possible ethnographic echoes and returning to the question of the uses of Dorset art, I should like to close by mentioning the remarkable Dorset art, made of driftwood (Fig. 30) and found in relative abundance at Button Point on Bylot Island. I am referring here to objects collected long ago by the very distinguished Therkel Mathiassen (1927) and more recently by Father Guy Mary-Rousselière (National Museum collection).



not (Figs. 20, 24). Long before we had discovered the now characteristic crosses we had rejected the idea that the utensils in question were needle cases or thimbles, as they had frequently been described. Now we think of them as "shaman utensil or amulet containers" and, perhaps, as "sucking tubes" (or "soul catchers"). As to the former, a very convincing "kit" exists from the Tyara site near Sugluk (Fig. 21) and the four other examples illustrated in Figure 20 from Igloolik, Mansel and southern Ellesmere Island have very little indeed to do with needle cases as far as their undoubtedly meaningful and traditional design is concerned.

The tubes shown in Figures 24 and 25 leave no doubt as to their spiritual associations: the open mouths, the caribou head, the bear heads, the crosses and, most of all, the great devotion, skill and knowledge with which these carvings had been produced. In fact, it is this very point of consummate skill and unfailing knowledge combined with love and care, all applied to what must be a well known and respected icon (and I believe the term "icon" is highly appropriate in this connection) which induces me to speak about a concept of artist-shamans or shaman-artists. As for the tubes themselves, I cannot possibly imagine how any prehistoric Eskimo could have ever been so frivolous as to use the opened mouth of a bear or caribou as a container for needles, however important needles were in prehistoric times. My explanation of their function as "sucking tubes" or "soul catchers" derives from their combined shape and image associations which are echoed in northwest coast Indian art.

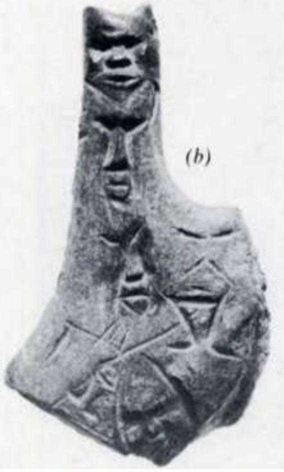
The four "shaman utensil containers" in Figure 20 reveal several other significant features, only one of which I am ready to discuss in this preliminary study. It is not the fact that, though coming from widely dispersed areas, the identical two walrus heads with interlocking tusks (Figs. 20, 23) appear on each of the containers' narrow ends, or that all but one exhibit the characteristic crosses; the most striking common feature is the inclusion of a human head motif (Fig. 23) that reappears in its perforated form not only on the containers, but also on flat, inverted, semi-abstract "bears in flight" from southern Ellesmere Island and two smaller fragments from Mansel (Fig. 26). The human face on the inverted bear shapes might well personify the shaman on a spirit flight or might also refer directly to the bear-spirit-helper.

Thalbitzer's description of *Tôrnârssuk* (the West Greenland bear-spirit) as a non-human, a supra-natural nature spirit, who represents the mysterious powers of nature and who manifests himself in ever-changing forms, fits the simultaneous and metamorphic bear-man images (the man-seal carving from Nuvuk Island, off Ivugivik, is closely related to them in content but totally different in style as in Figure 19).

The perforated faces, in turn, recall various small human masks (maskettes) of several areas and dates (Fig. 27). The crowns of the mask shapes (some originally deriving from the bears' legs) have a typical triangular Dorset shape—reminiscent of the basal spurs of Dorset harpoons as in Figure 12. The maskettes, especially the one from the Tyara site, also recall the Qikertaaluk petroglyphs (Fig. 28a) discovered near Wakeham Bay in 1961 which, in turn, because of their shapes and their massing, could relate to the mysterious face clusters found at Igloolik (Fig. 28b) and Upernavik (West Greenland). This last point, however, seems to me somewhat tenuous at present, but not altogether outside the realm of possibility. In any case, I have no clear idea what the meaning of the face clusters or massed petroglyphs might be except that they constitute an important body of figural Dorset art. Neither am I ready yet to discuss the more abstracted Dorset faces (Fig. 29a), which have such strong relation to Aleut (Fig. 29b) and Okvik (Fig. 29c) carvings and to Ipiutak antler tube engravings.

Nor am I anywhere near ready yet to discuss interpretations of the human Dorset images and figures (Fig. 6) except to note that, artistically speaking, they are among the most accomplished expressions of that period. Their form (the application of style and technique to subject matter) is highly Expressionist, i.e., it relates stylistically to the art forms which became widely known in the 20th century as (German) Expressionism. Their form emphasizes content, vigour, and involvement (as opposed to style, elegance, and detachment). The miracle of most of these figures is again the great devotion and artistic accomplishment with which they are executed.

Fig. 28. Face clusters, (a) petroglyph in soapstone, Wakeham Bay, c. 8-10", (b) antler fragment carved with 16 faces, Igloolik area, ↕ 4½", (c) caribou antler, Abverdjar, Igloolik area, ↕ 8".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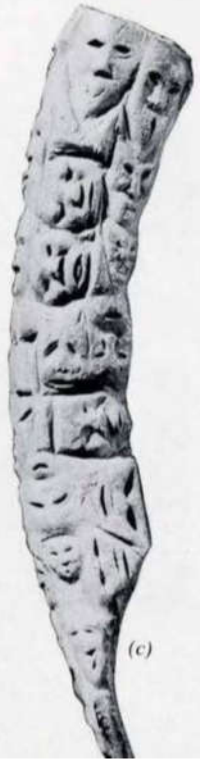
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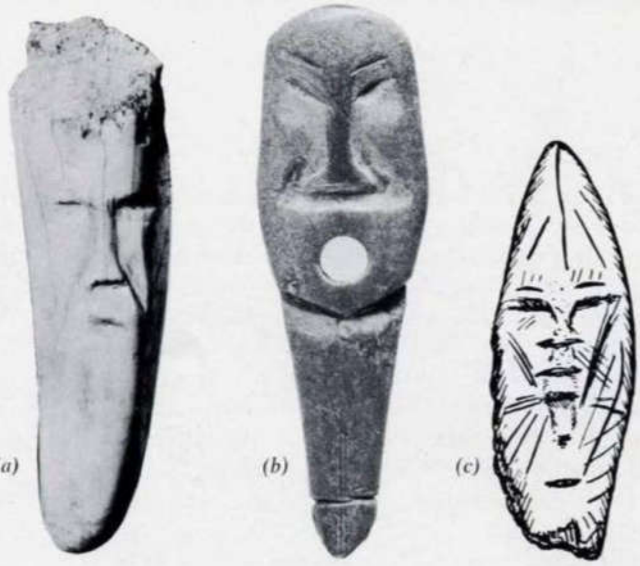

Fig. 29. Carved faces, (a) Alarnerk, Igloolik area, size not known, (b) Umnak Island in the Aleutians, ↕ 2¾", (c) Punuk Islands off St. Lawrence Island, Bering Sea, ↕ 2⅜".

This wooden art so well seen at Button Point is briefly glimpsed in rare finds in Greenland, Victoria Island, and about Lake Harbour. It was probably a widespread and major part of Dorset art. In this material we may come much closer to a part answer to the question of the purposes of Dorset art. In the Button Point objects, entertainment pieces and amulets to protect or enhance the wearer are not readily seen. What first strikes me is the unmistakable evidence of magic, sympathetic magic to aid the eager hunter. Two carvings of bears (or wolverines), one seal carving and a shark (?) carving each have a small slit cut centrally in the back between the shoulder blades and, into these slits someone has shoved a sliver of wood for in two the sliver has remained in place. Most likely, the shaman himself had fashioned and "killed" these carvings to bring hunting success. Far more sinister are three armless human busts, a doll that has had separate legs and arms attached and two very abstracted human figures—each has a slot in the throat or upper chest and, in two, the magically lethal sliver of wood is still embedded. Three, at least, of the Button Point specimens, show a trace of red ochre stain and Meldgaard had noted that same material associated with graves in the Igloolik region. The collection also includes a wooden fragment probably of a drum rim and two fragments of life-size wooden face masks, worn perhaps by the shaman and perhaps in these masks were set the ivory shaman's teeth that occur occasionally in Dorset samples. Earlier discussion noted the possible relationships between Dorset art and that of Ipiutak. In these masks we may again probe tentatively at the question of Dorset-Ipiutak parallels for in Ipiutak graves two very elaborately incised ivory death masks were found with skulls; and elaborate ivory mouth covers occurred similarly. Perhaps these masks and mouth covers were part of a burial cult—but since only two masks were recovered from a large number of graves possibly the masks belonged to Ipiutak shamans who were buried in their full regalia. The same speculation may apply to the Button Point masks; the little "killed" figures of animals and people may have been part of a shaman's kit that was similarly buried at Button Point (Fig. 30), although burials have not up to the present time been recognized there.

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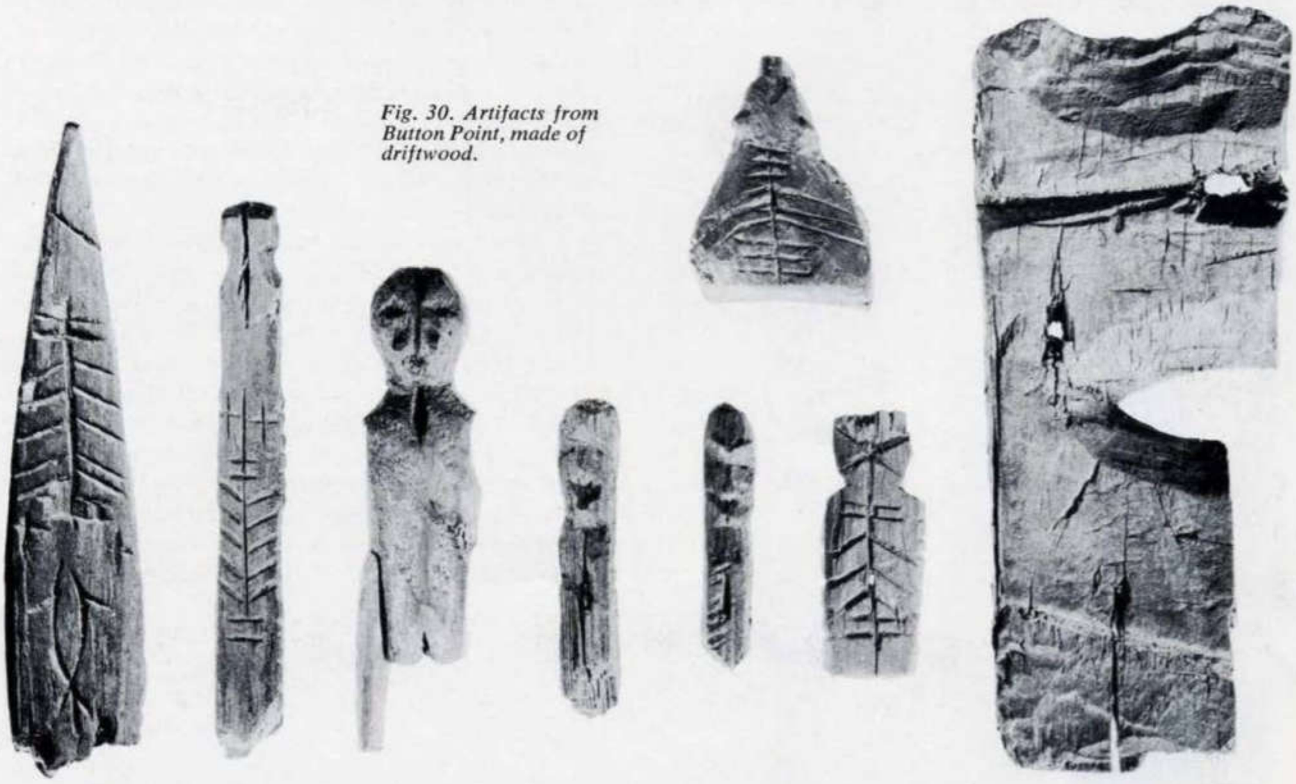


Fig. 30. Artifacts from Button Point, made of driftwood.

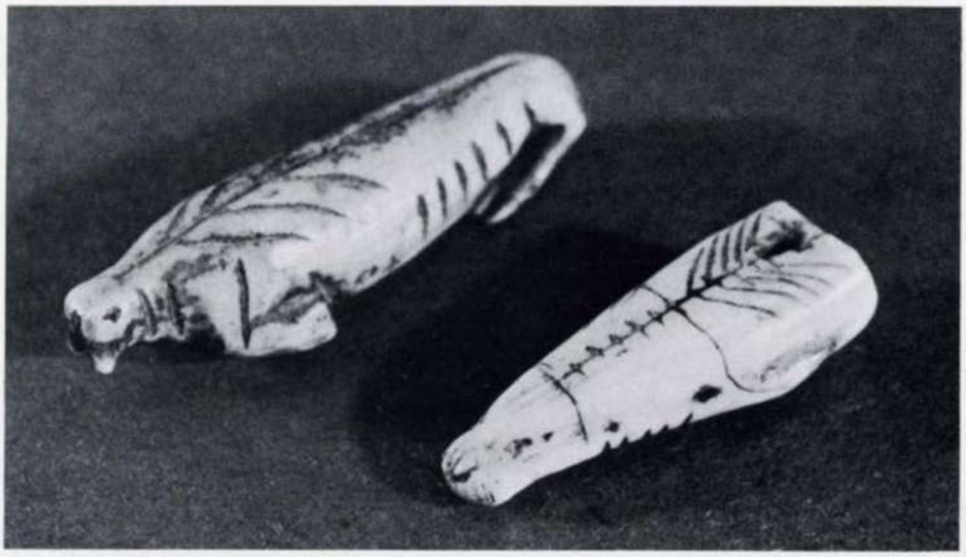


Fig. 31. Walrus and seal from Igloolik area, (a) walrus, ↔ 1⅞₁₆", (b) seal, ↔ 1"

As far as the several sea and land mammal carvings (Fig. 32) are concerned, they relate almost inevitably to the magical art forms discussed earlier. However, a few of these carvings suggest a somewhat less potent magic than the bear and falcon carvings. They call to mind sympathetic hunting magic or, perhaps, propitiatory spirit magic, more in terms of the personal amulets than the ritual shaman's utensils. Yet again, such exquisite carvings as the single-headed weasel from Pingerluk (Fig. 32) near Igloolik (there are also several double-headed examples) show such supreme confidence and artistic knowledge that I have to think of them as very special works of art and not as a commonly practised activity.

I have said nothing about death-masks, shamans' (or perhaps bear-human) teeth (Figs. 16, 30), and facial decorations. Also, I have abstained from mentioning the spatula-like objects that Meldgaard relates to highly abstracted bear shapes with equally abstracted skeleton designs. There are many points that seem to substantiate his hypothesis, particularly the existence of staff-like objects from several areas, complete with carved bear heads and skeletal designs. However, in the context of Meldgaard's chronology based on his excavations in the Igloolik district, and his style sequence from representation towards abstraction within a defined time-span, some of his assumptions (about the spatula objects in particular and about the dating of Dorset art and its origin in general) need to be closely re-examined. The time gaps between Collins, Harp, Maxwell, Meldgaard, and Taylor are too great to be ignored. But the work that needs to be done in this regard is not my kettle of fish, so I gladly bow out to the more expert archaeological gastronomes.

Postscript: In June 1967 (after this article had been written) I visited Elmer Harp at Dartmouth College to take a look at the Dorset material "most recently" excavated by him (1961 to 1963) at the Port aux Choix-2 site in Newfoundland. I was utterly and completely stunned. Before me was a large assembly of typical Dorset specimens but with a very local and, in fact, different flavour about them, particularly the art objects. Harp, significantly, called his material "provincial" and I would have liked to add "archaic" had not this useful word been appropriated by archaeologists to describe the specifically Indian "Archaic tradition". In any case, the Port au Choix-2 material will require revision of our present ideas about Dorset culture in general and about Dorset art in particular. ◆

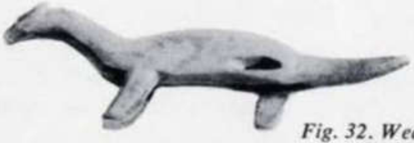
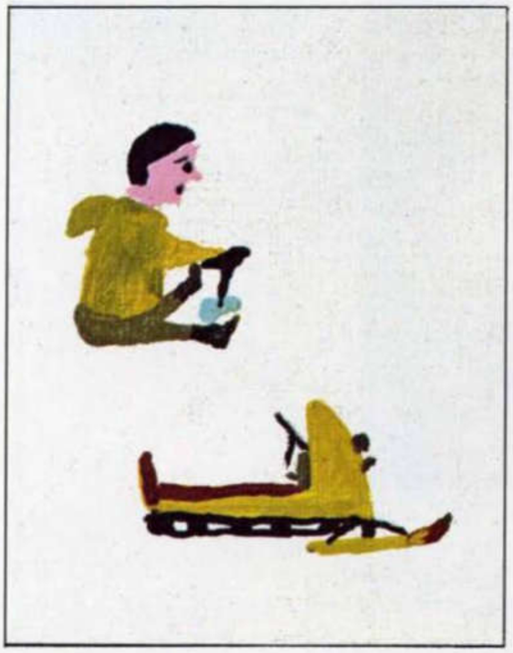


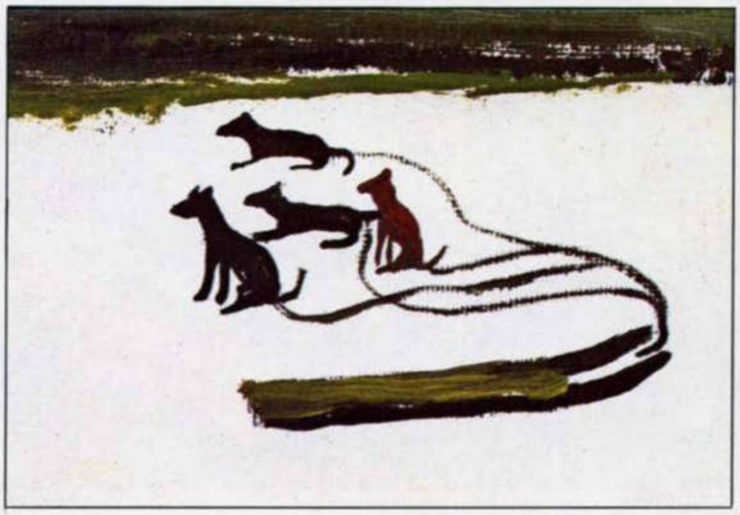
Fig. 32. Weasel, Pingerluk, Igloolik area, ↔ 2¼".

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Art objects illustrated in this article are from the collections of the following persons and institutions, to whom grateful acknowledgement is made: Danish National Museum, Copenhagen, on loan from National Museum of Canada: Figs. 1, 9a b, 15a b, 16a, 29; National Museum of Canada, Ottawa: 2a c, 8, 10, 11a b, 12a b, 13, 15c, 16b, 19, 20a b c, 21a b c, 23, 24b, 26a b c d, 28a, 30, 32; Eskimo Museum, Churchill, Manitoba: 2b, 3, 4a b, 6b, 7, 14, 24a c, 25a b, 27c, 28b, 31a b; Elmer Harp: 5; Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford; 6a; Michigan State University, on loan from National Museum of Canada: 9c; American Museum of Natural History, New York: 17a b, 18, 29c; S. I. Rudenko, from *The Ancient Culture of the Bering Sea and the Eskimo Problem*, University of Toronto Press: 22; University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge: 28c; Jean S. Aigner: 29b.

Photographs: Jorgen Meldgaard: 1, 9a b, 15a b, 16a, 28c, 29a; National Museum of Canada: 2a b c, 10, 11a b, 12a b, 13, 15c, 16b, 19, 20a b c, 21a b c, 24a b, 27a b c, 30, 32; George Swinton: 3, 4a b, 6b, 7, 8, 14, 23, 24c, 25a b, 26a b c d, 28b, 31a b; Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford: 6a; Moreau Maxwell: 9c; American Museum of Natural History: 17a b, 18, 29c; David Sanger: 28a; Jean S. Aigner: 29b.



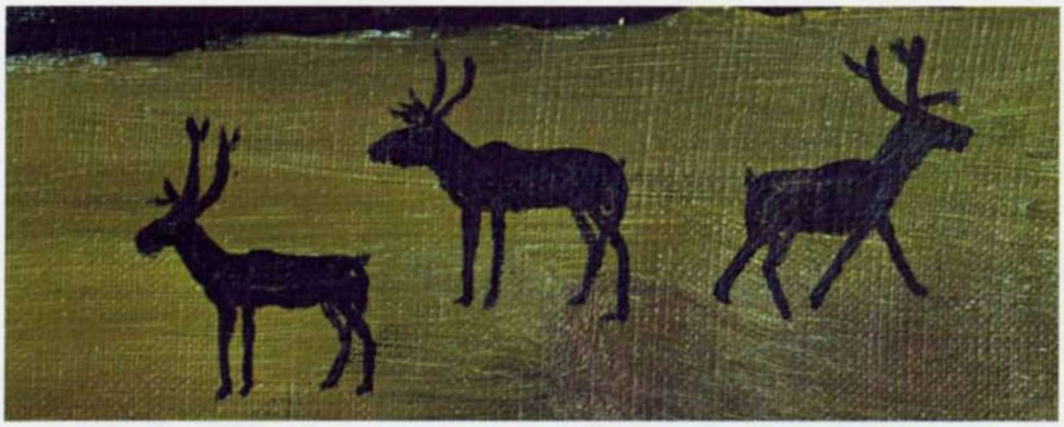


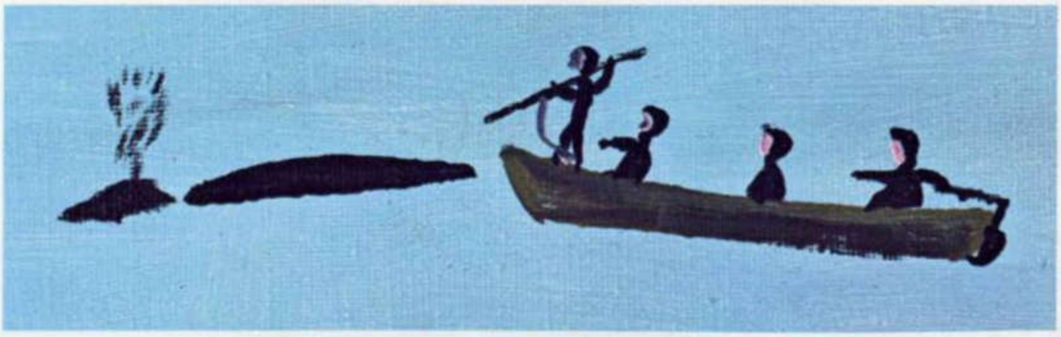
NAUJA PAINTER AT RANKIN INLET

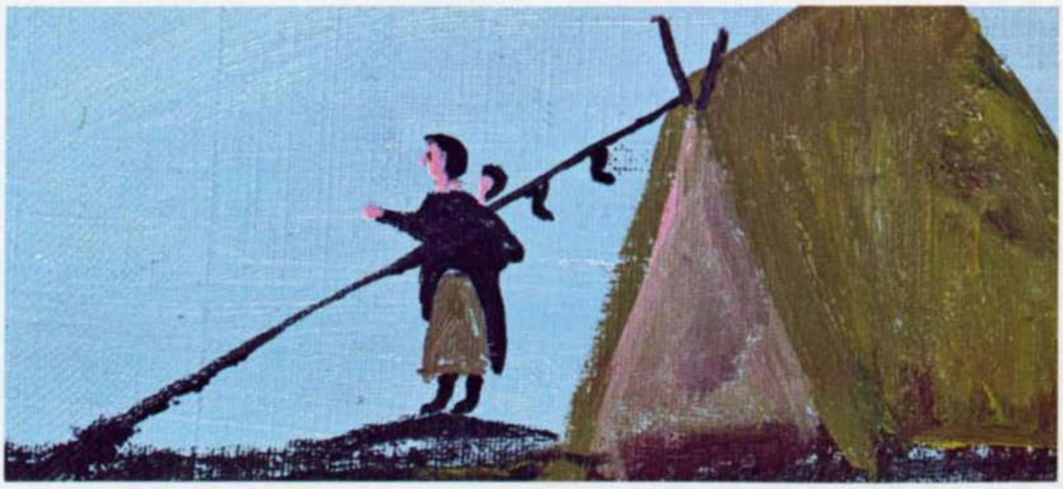
A skilled carver of stone who just had to paint, that was Nauja (Nauya) E3-174 when he collected some old plywood, some discarded housepaint, cut down a canoe paintbrush and set to work. His impulse was sound for though quite untaught he met the challenge of a new medium successfully and soon proved himself a talented painter. He was encouraged by anthropologist Robert Williamson of Rankin Inlet who provided oils, brushes, and canvas so that Nauja no longer had to paint his pictures on both sides of his boards. Painting is an innovation among arctic people for though stone and ivory and antler were always available for carving and engraving besides furnishing the tools for everyday life, and cut-out sealskin might be applied to create pictures, suitable materials for painting were non-existent in their land. Eskimos are ever ready to try something new and now children in school are prompted to paint and draw to express themselves.

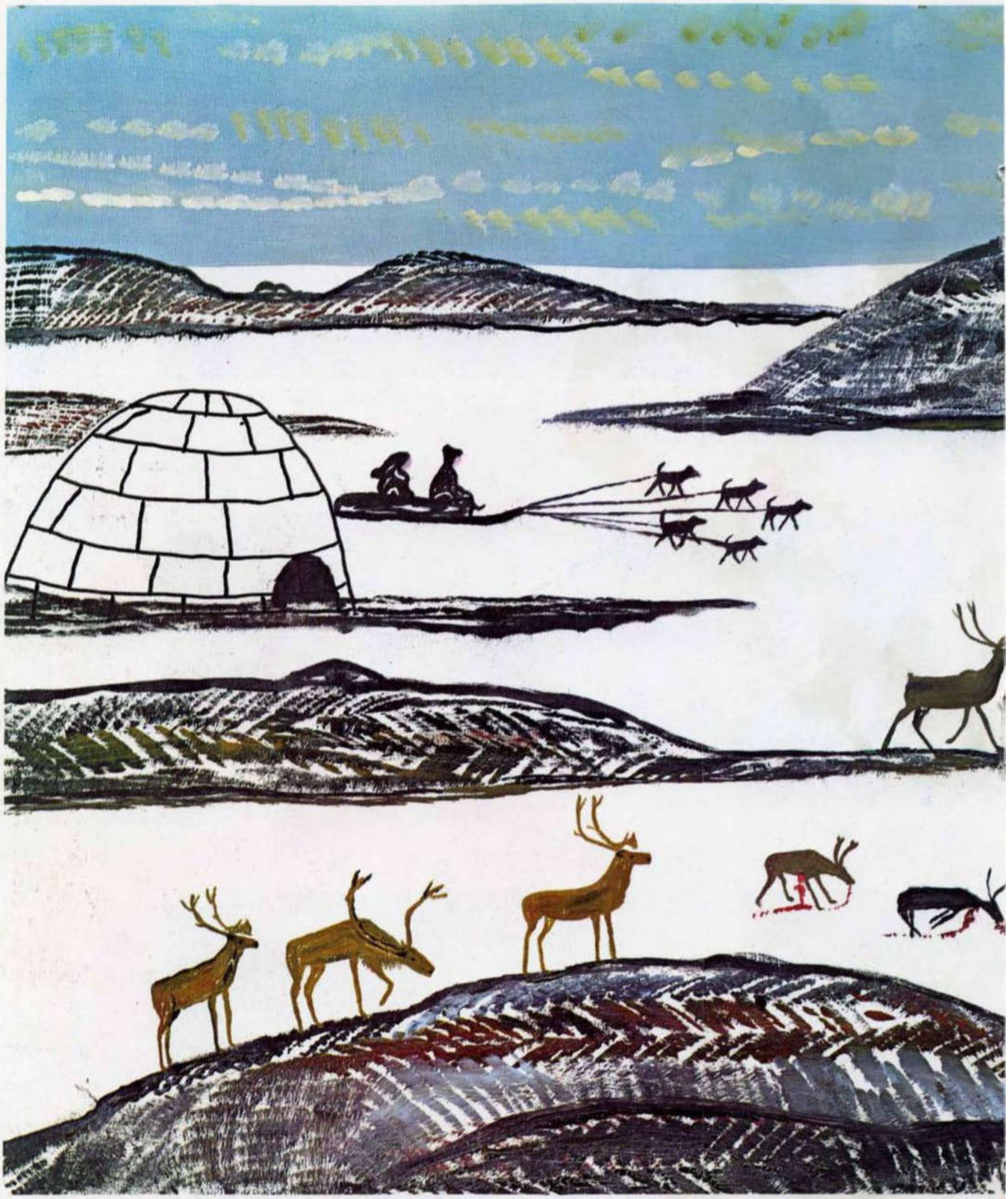
Eighteen years ago Nauja and his family, with others in Keewatin, suffered from poliomyelitis but now, in his fifties and many times a grandfather, he is busy hunting, trapping and fishing; painting comes between times, in bursts, when he will sometimes do four or five paintings in a week, but when the weather is good, outdoor work comes first. His wife died last year and with school-age children he may now stay home more and so perhaps paint more.

Details from two different paintings done by Nauja in 1966, one a winter scene, the other a summer scene, at Rankin Inlet, reproduced in actual size. From the winter scene a man has gone by skidoo to fish through a hole in the ice and another has arrived by dogteam. The summer scene shows caribou, whale hunting from a boat with outboard motor, and a woman with laundry on the line by her tent. Below, Nauja at work.

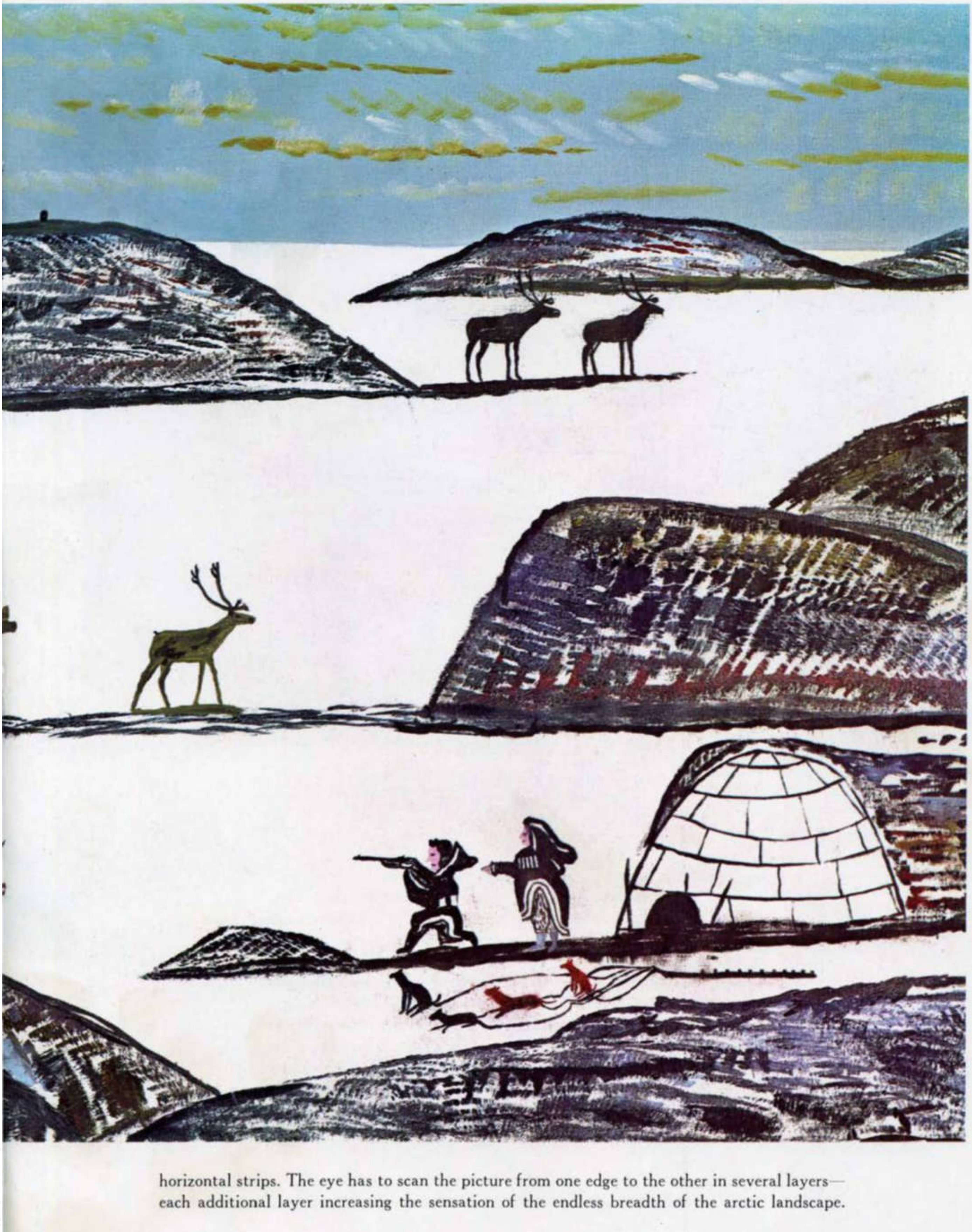




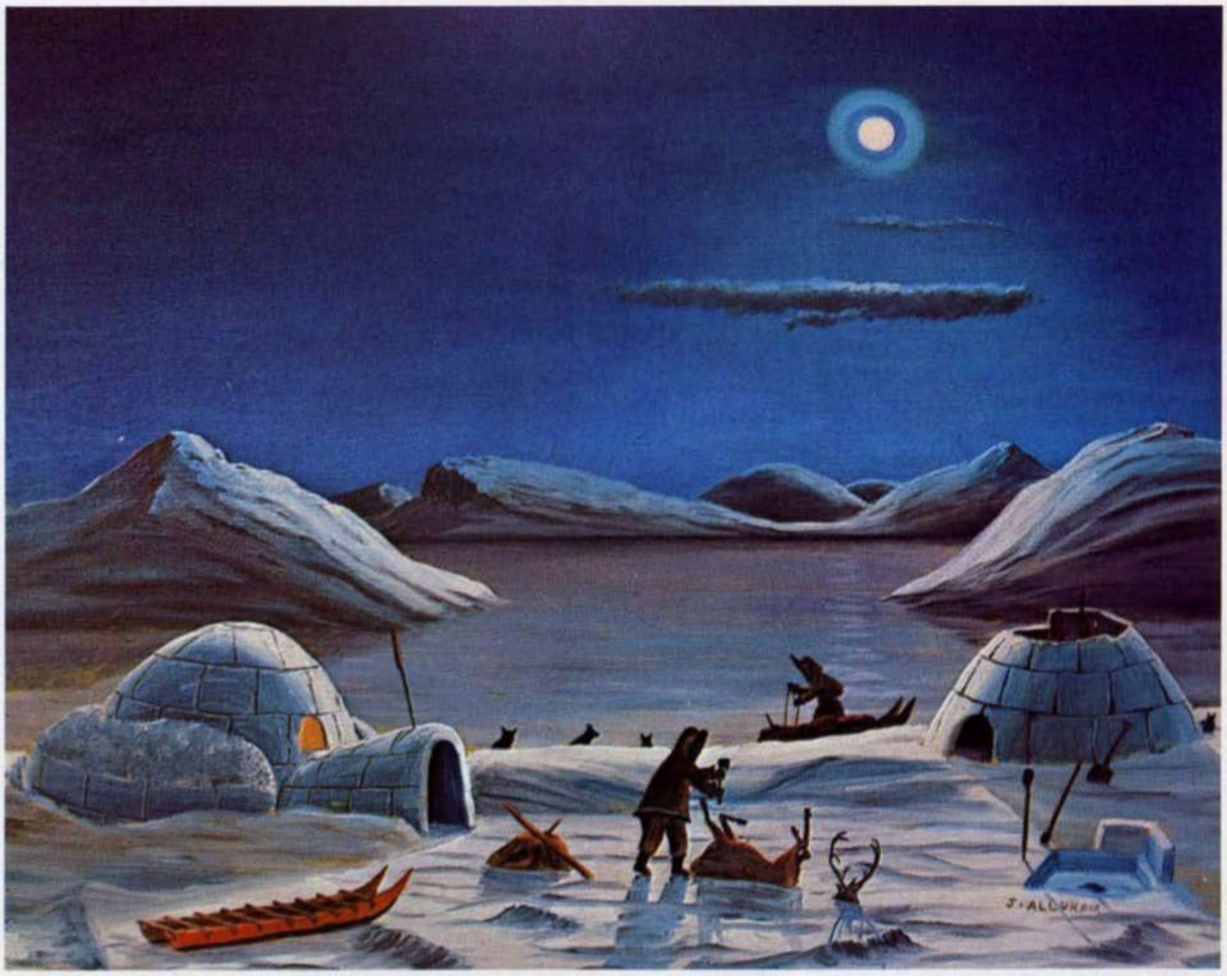




Nauja's paintings unfold cinema-like before the viewer. Although immediately successful as two-dimensional composition, very much like mediaeval tapestry, the view is divided into wide



horizontal strips. The eye has to scan the picture from one edge to the other in several layers—each additional layer increasing the sensation of the endless breadth of the arctic landscape.

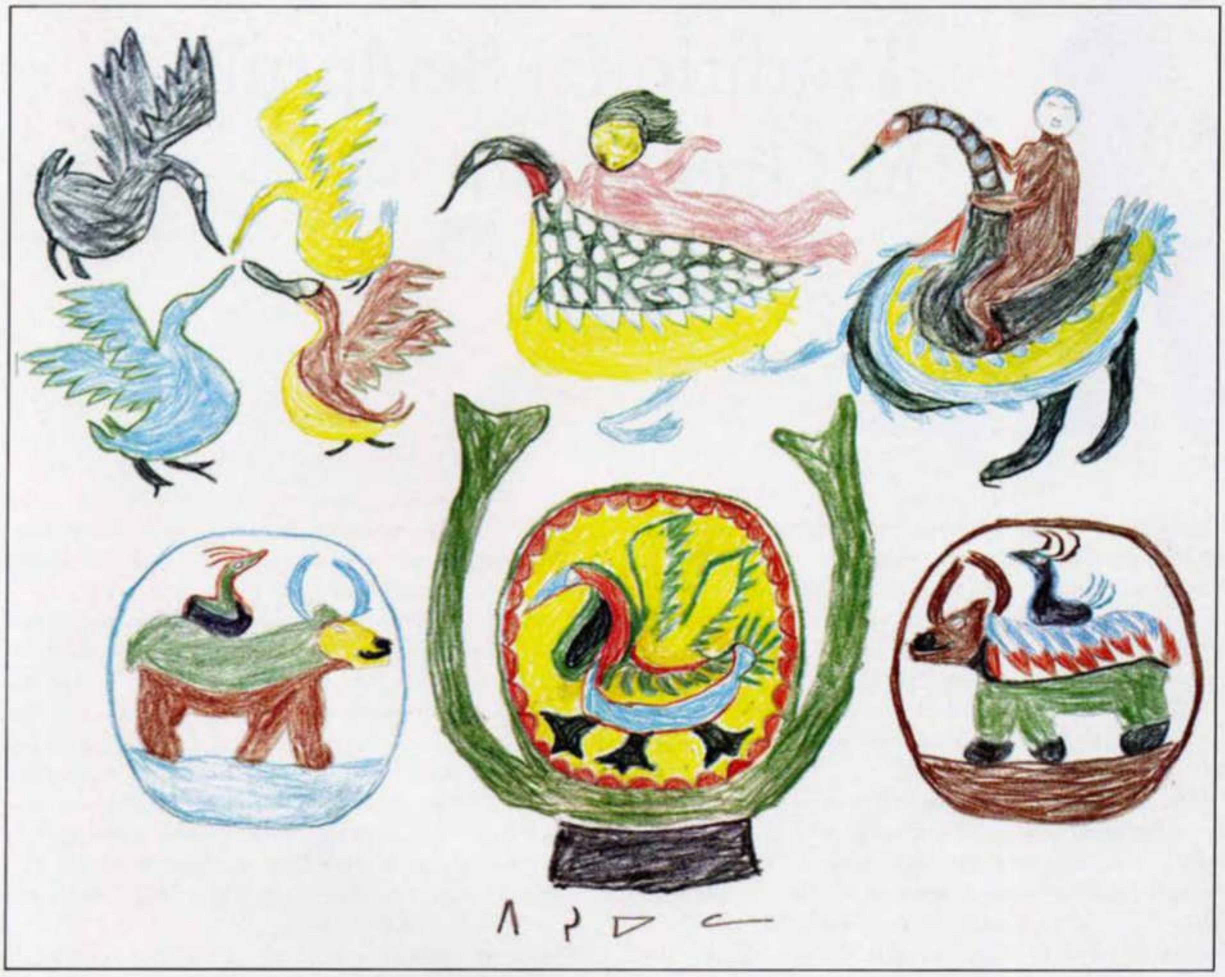


TED GRANT PHOTO

Oil on plywood, c.1964.

ALLUKPIK

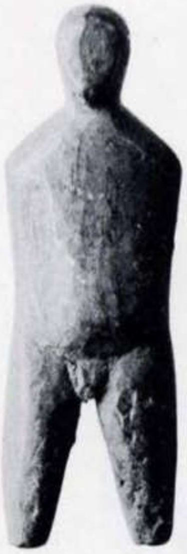
One of the inland Caribou Eskimo people, John Allukpik came from the Contwoyto Lake area to live in Coppermine. Since boyhood he has been plagued with tuberculosis and has been in and out of hospital in the south several times. It was there he started to paint and he has continued to do so in Coppermine spasmodically. His pictures tend to be rather similar, imaginative winter moonlit scenes, unlike those of Nauja whose views of Rankin Inlet are at once recognizable to those who know the country, and whose subjects are varied. Allukpik has never taken up carving. He is married and has three or four children but he is not friendly towards outsiders. His health is not good enough for him to do much hunting but he travels inland to the caribou country for he is at heart a land Eskimo not one of the coast people.



Crayon, c.1963.

PITSEOLAK

As a child Pitseolak (Pitsolak) E7-1100 was taken with her family from her birthplace on an island in Hudson Strait to southern Baffin Island. There they lived a nomadic life ranging from the coast with its sea creatures to the inland caribou trails and to the nesting grounds of the wild geese. Her family were skilful at making things and her father in particular was considered very artistic though he did not carve or draw pictures. He and her husband died of a mysterious illness that carried off several of their band. Pitseolak, a widow in her sixties, lives with some of her family in Cape Dorset where for years she has been creating prints reproduced by stone-cuts, stencils or engravings that have achieved wide fame. She is the mother of many children, all of whom are talented carvers and printmakers.



(1) A "willow-boy" from East Greenland, c.1880.

Traditional Sculpture in Greenland

By JØRGEN MELDGAARD

THE GREENLANDER has for more than two centuries been on a gradual but steady walk away from an Eskimo way of life. In the later years, however, he has revived an interest in Eskimo traditions and in the Eskimo past. Greenlanders are visiting their Eskimo kin in arctic Canada. Rooted in this country-wide interest The Greenland Museum was established in Godthaab in 1966, and an association for Greenlandic Art and Handicraft has been started.

The modern Greenlander—in his large fishing vessel or in his apartment with central heating—on occasion asks himself how he managed to survive as an Eskimo hunter. The new museum presents a variety of answers. The exhibits of the traditional art reveals that one of the means to survival in the struggle against superhuman nature was, from the first, magic. Invocations were as important as good hunting implements and found many expressions: representations of coveted prey; amulets for averting evil forces or invoking strength and success.

"You choose a good, straight willow and out of the thickest part of the trunk you carve a doll which you fasten inside the hood of your boy's anorak. Willows which grow straight have more strength than the ones that straggle along the ground, and this charm will not only make a boy grow fast, but also give him a strong back so that he can walk through life erect and fearless . . ." An old East-Greenlander evoked this background for a modest little carving (1)—before it ended up as an object in a museum. As with the willow-boy all expressions of Eskimo art should be seen in the context of Eskimo life.

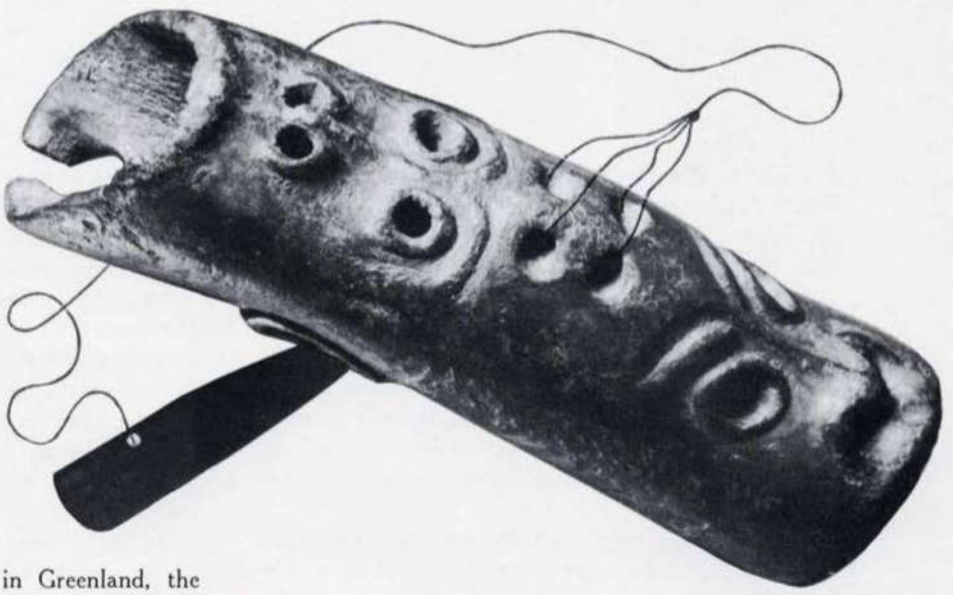
To the Eskimo the dwarf willow was a symbol of strength and suppleness against the overwhelming arctic background, where survival depends upon a man's ability to contend with the forces of nature, while at the same time yielding to them and conforming with them. He used to be very much at the mercy of natural forces, and if he wanted to make plans, he always had to do so with reservations: weather and the forces of nature permitting, then perhaps. . . .

The East-Greenlander expressed his philosophy in this way: "I know nothing, but life constantly confronts me with forces which are stronger than myself. The experiences of generations show us that survival is difficult, and it is always the inevitable that overtakes man and woman. So we believe in evil. The good things we can neglect, for they are good in themselves, and in no need of worship. Evil, however—which lies in wait for us in the great darkness, threatens us through storms and gales, and sneaks upon us in the clammy fog—evil has to be kept off the roads we walk."

However, nobody worries about tomorrow as long as today is happy and full of life. And consequently the Eskimo was reproached for his "carefree" attitude by shocked Europeans who tried to plan and to impose a different way of life and thought upon him. Concerning the creation of "art" the European usually succeeded. He received from the Eskimo the curious and the primitive objects he asked for—in mass production.

The art produced by the Greenlanders during the first three millenniums has to be excavated from the frozen soil, and the image restored by the archaeologist is miserably incomplete. It is restricted to those forms of art which were conveyed in stone, bone, and wood; carvings and engravings in the limited and simple materials which were at the disposal of the artist. But frequently these artifacts give a vivid picture of the Eskimo's view of life and his ability to express it through carvings. The form of expression varies from place to place and through the changing periods. The "cultures", which the archaeologists try to draw up, are characterized by quite specific styles though they all bear the stamp of a common Eskimo attitude and the hunter's view of his surroundings.

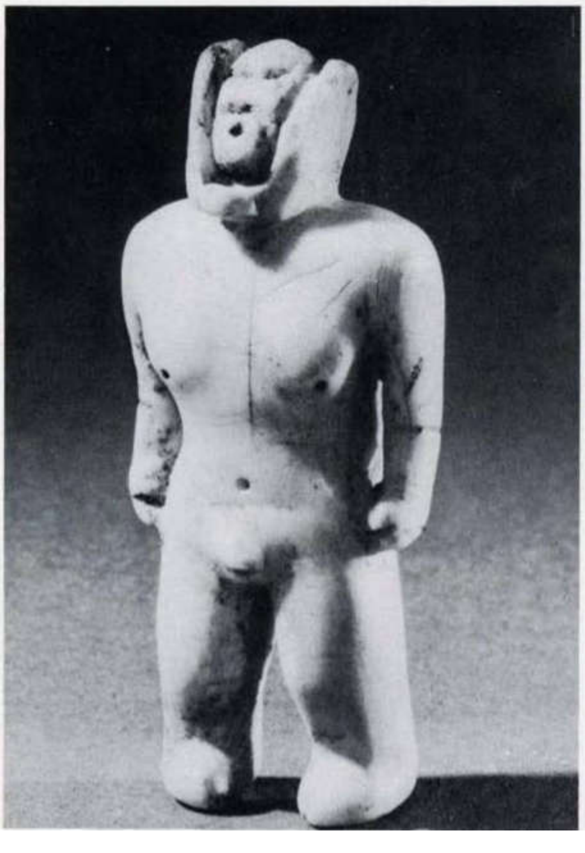
Assistant Curator at the National Museum in Copenhagen, Dr. Meldgaard has made archaeological expeditions to the Arctic in Greenland and Canada and is a specialist in Eskimo studies.



(2) Ajaqaq, the cup-and-ball game. Carving in antler from Upernavik area, early Dorset culture, possibly 1st century B.C.

The earliest stone age cultures in Greenland, the Independence—I culture (2100-2000 B.C.) and the Sarqaq culture (1500-800 B.C.) have brought us few evidences of their art, only some geometric engravings have been preserved. But without any doubt they one day will emerge through a lucky excavation. We meet in the succeeding Dorset culture an abundantly varied art, which must have been developed on the basis of still older Eskimo traditions.

During two periods Dorset people spread from Canada along the coasts of Greenland hunting caribou, walrus and seal. From the Thule district in the north to the southern and milder fiords of western Greenland we meet their trails in the first century B.C.; settlements with thousands of small stone tools and a few of the more perishable bone and wooden objects. The preserved carvings indicate that Dorset man mainly sought his motifs among the animals he hunted, and he reproduced these by two quite different means of expression: a stylized representation with geometric patterns most likely of importance in the hunting magic; and contrariwise a striving towards a naturalistic form as seen by the hunter's keen eye, aware of the characterizing details. Finally, a few carvings which express a general wish to ornament tools and other objects; and in this group we may place the illustrated *ajaqaq*, part of the cup-and-ball game which at this early period has been given the shape of a piece of antler decorated with faces (*2*). We may suppose the grimaces reflect the pleasures of the game in the winter house.



(3) Male figure carved in walrus tusk, 2⅜" high, from Inuarfigssuaq, Thule area. Late Dorset culture, probably 7th to 8th century.

A deterioration of the climate marks the end of the early Dorset culture in West Greenland, whereas the kinsmen in arctic Canada not only stayed alive, they carried on and developed the art traditions towards the varied and numerous products known from the late "classic" Dorset culture. Favoured by better climatic conditions northwest Greenland received new groups of settlers in the 7th and 8th centuries, representatives of the latest stage of the Dorset culture. Again we meet the stylized reproduction of living beings, frequently through simple and symbolic expressions, where for instance a cross and a group of seven dots put down arbitrarily were a fully comprehensible image of a mammal. Other carvings reveal the tendency towards characterizing and naturalistic forms which today are more easy for us to evaluate. To this last category belong a number of distinguished ivory carvings, lively figures of animals, and more severely designed human forms which in spite of their smallness and established type can astonish one by their monumentality and personality; like for instance, the male figure found in North Greenland (3).

The present Greenlander's direct ancestors, the people of the Thule culture, appear on the Greenland hunting territories adjoining Ellesmere Island about A.D. 900.

From large skin boats whales were killed, and with a highly developed hunting technique the seal was soon to be caught in large numbers in the West Greenland fiords from fragile kayaks. The Dorset culture disintegrated during the meeting with new people representing a new way of living; the Dorset art, however, may be traced in East Greenland, where a mixed culture developed. In our eyes the whalers of the Thule culture are less prominent artists, but since the basis of our judgement is restricted to their carvings—which are few in number—we can only observe that these products exhibit stereotyped forms and patterns.

At the meeting with the Europeans during the 18th and 19th centuries the art manifestations of the Greenlanders were seldom noticed. The exception was the Angmagssalik Eskimos, who emerged into the light of history as late as in 1884 on the eastern coast of Greenland. They were the last 413 individuals of a former prosperous and widespread population. Due to climatic changes the seals had nearly disappeared and starvation was rife; the little community was stamped by manslaughter and blood-feud. But art was flourishing.

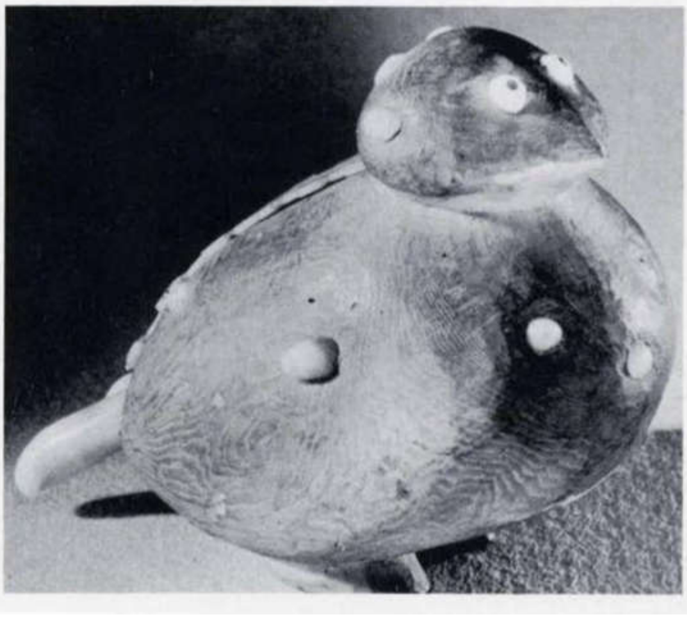
The hard struggle for life and the fear of evil forces are evident in the artists' choice of motifs which, whether in the form of ornamental decorations or of sculptures, always have a protective purpose: to ward off evil or to wrest the quarry from evil forces. In the carving illustrated the family heads of a whole settlement have gathered in front of the bears (6). It is not an ordinary bear hunt, the wives are present, and four couples advance in procession. The aim has undoubtedly been to conjure up bear for the settlement. Similar small figures were riveted onto wooden objects of various kinds such as buckets, eye shades, throwing boards for harpoons, and containers like Lazarus' tool box illustrated here (7). The seal is the most frequent motive, and the degree of stylization varies.

Wooden figures of women were made in great numbers by the Angmagssalik Eskimos, and all were carved after a definite pattern (5). They were toys, but some were worn as amulets closely tied to a similar male figure. The often lavish abundance of female forms—particularly pronounced during these decades of famine—may have a connection with a dream of fertility and fatness. The style in general is rather conventional, although two old traditions for carving human forms seem to be united. The monumental figure firmly planted on two solid legs points back to the Dorset culture, whereas the lack of arms, the shape of the head, and the demand for a firm, simplified type are marks of the Thule culture.

The angakok (shaman) had his helping spirits, as in most Eskimo communities. But at Angmagssalik fear was so pronounced that even the common man created his own helping spirits, known as tupilaks. With a few exceptions these creatures of ill omen do not appear in the form of sculpture until recent times. Such carvings are models, produced in order to show the European the appearance of the real tupilak, which the artist had either created, seen in dreams, or merely heard described. Thousands of these small "tupilaks", however, are now to be found on book-shelves in Danish homes as the dominating representatives for "traditional" Greenland art.

The magic background of the Angmagssalik sculptures has been strongly emphasized. The carving of a gentle ptarmigan is illustrated here (4) to indicate that not everything is magic and fear—any more than the form of the sculptures necessarily is predetermined by the magic content. Carvings have been made with an eye to forms and proportions, testifying that there was also a desire to beautify the surroundings.

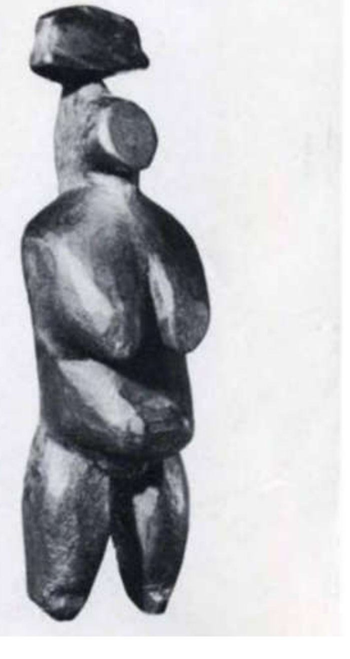
The 20th century has led Greenland art in three directions. First, there has been a natural approach towards European forms of expression, marked even

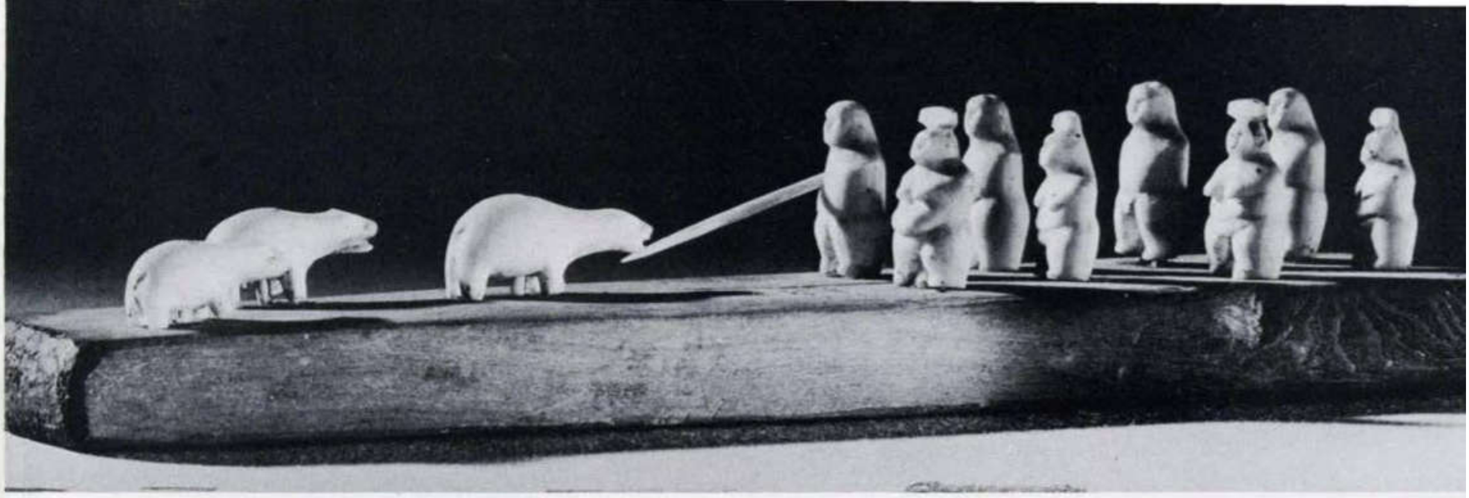


(4) Ptarmigan carved in wood with eyes, tail, and ornaments in walrus tusk, 2⅜" high. East Greenland, 1884.

(5) Right: Woman with top-knot, in wood, 4" high, from Angmagssalik area, mid 19th century.

(8) Far right: Bird-man by modern carver Otto Tomasen of Upernavik, 1952, 3¼" high.





(6) Bear hunt ceremonial. Eight humans, the largest less than an inch high, and three bears are nailed to a driftwood board. Angmagssalik, c. 1890.

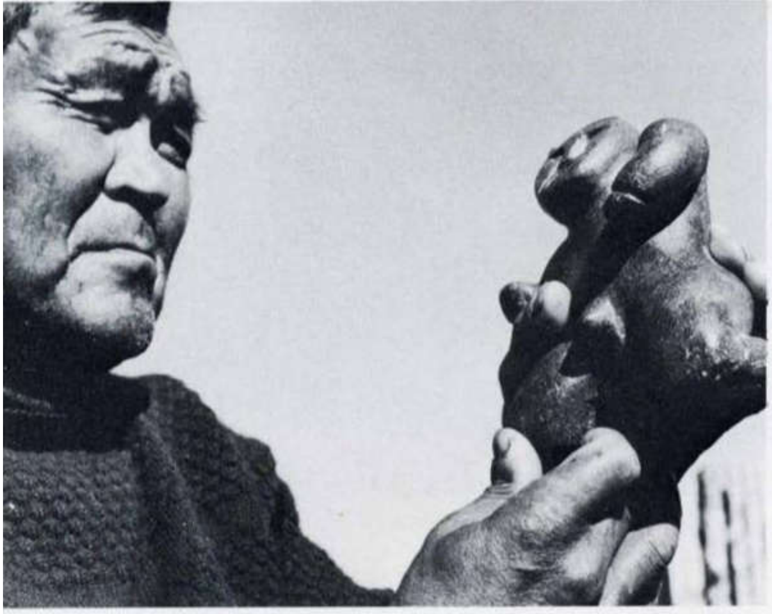
JETTE BANG

(7) Lazarus, young East Greenlander, with his tool-box. Figures of walrus tusk are nailed to the lid.

by the attendance of Greenland artists at the Royal Academy for Fine Arts in Copenhagen. Secondly, a locally developed handicraft has arisen to meet a considerable demand for souvenirs. Anywhere now in Greenland it is possible to buy small figures that in style and choice of subject are adapted to the requirements of the great majority of Danes and tourists. A considerable part of these are the so-called tupilaks.

Finally, there has been in recent years an important revival of a more traditional art, which to a certain extent is based on Eskimo tradition. Generally the products must be characterized as handicraft, though they can have obvious artistic qualities: skin embroideries, basketwork, models of hunting implements and weapons, and carvings of figures in ivory. Since 1938 these activities have been encouraged by the association "Greenland Handicraft" (Copenhagen), which has also organized sales in Greenland and Denmark. More recently a Greenland association has undertaken to promote the interest in art and handicraft, especially in West Greenland. This new and local association "Greenland Folk Art" (in Godthaab), seeks through annual contributions from a growing membership, through donations, and through income from sales, to support both art and the Greenlanders' newly founded museum, Landsmuseet, in Godthaab.

"Greenland Folk Art" also encourages sculpture. Even in West Greenland, with its developed town-communities, individuals and groups unexpectedly come forward with works of art marked by a strongly original and eskimoid conception of the motifs. This artistic manifestation is still limited to a few localities and to small groups of active carvers; some towns-people inspired by a gifted and energetic person, or a family group.

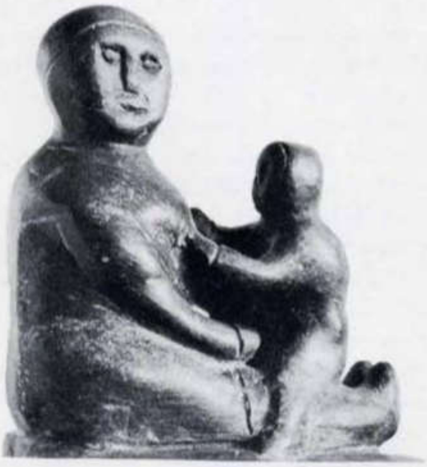


Kristoffer Kristoffersen and his wife, Dorte, each hold one of their carvings and below is Dorte's "mother and child" in soapstone, 6¾" high. (Coll. Birte Christensen, Godthaab.)

As illustrating examples a few carvings are selected from two families. Northernmost on the west coast, in Upernavik, we find Otto Tomasen and his sons; all over Greenland they have a reputation as skilled carvers in ivory. The production of carvings from this circle of artists has during the years grown extremely big, resulting in the development of certain standard types which are only varied slightly. But now and then original works of art are created, often inspired by imaginary beings from old Eskimo myths, like the "bird-man" which is shown here (8).

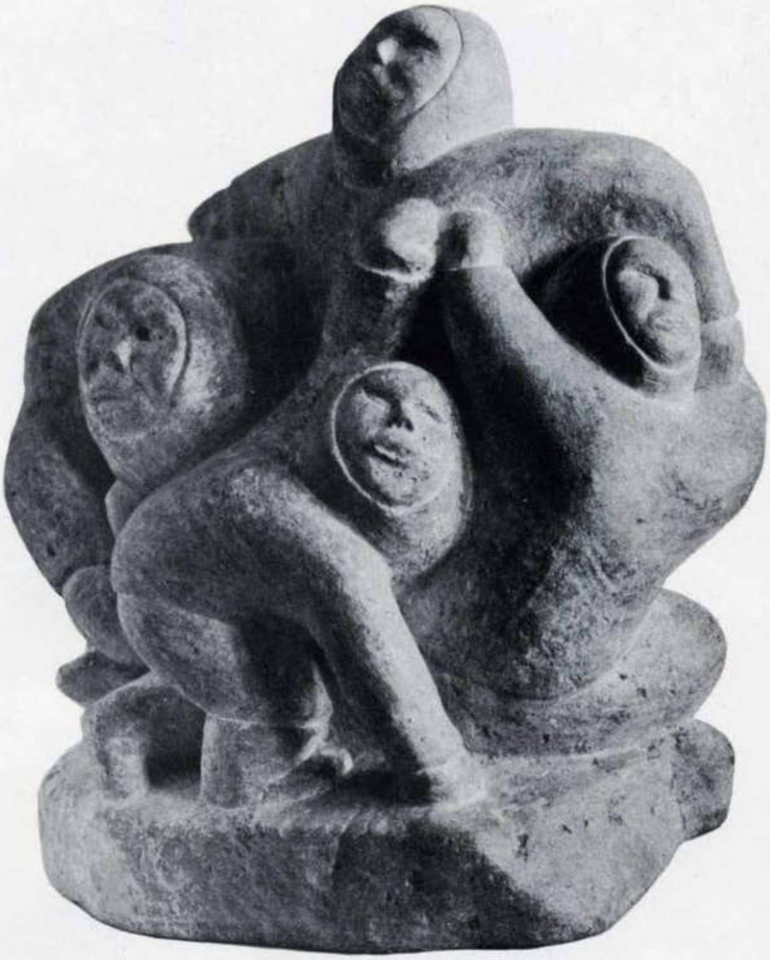
In Godthaab, the main town of Greenland, the Kristoffersen family displays a considerable talent in the soft and yielding soapstone. The figures are limited in size by the raw material to, as a rule, four to eight inches in height. The head of the family, Kristoffer Kristoffersen (aged about 60 years) has, alongside hunting and odd jobs in the town, produced simple, vigorous male figures. His wife Dorte (58) has in the last two years made a small number of sculptures, where the motif often is mother and child; her compositions are severe and tranquil. Their daughter, Dorte (27), is a beginner, but she displays a talent related to that of her mother.

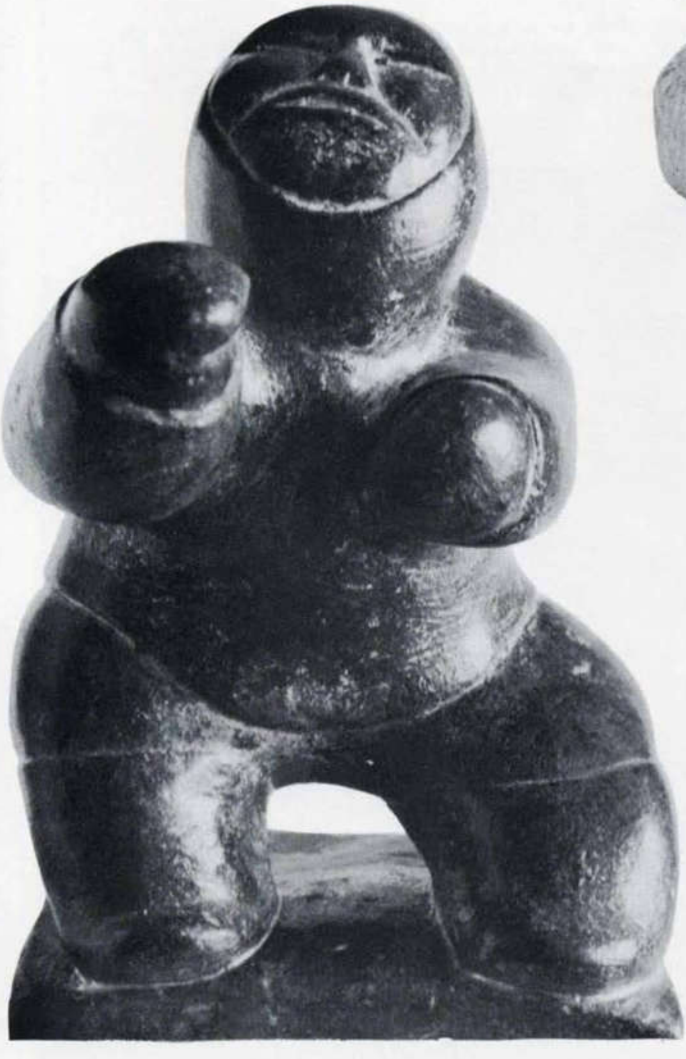
The son, Simon (33) is the dominant personality of the family. In ten or twelve years he has produced a large number of carvings, and during recent years his works have been showing a continuous development of an original talent.



Simon Kristoffersen's work has points of resemblance to modern Canadian Eskimo art; but his carvings display a common Eskimo style with a very personal conception of movement and sculptural design. The subjects, usually men, either singly or in groups, are identifiable as mythical figures; like, for example, the mighty Kâgssassuk. This hero grew up as an orphan, ill-treated by everybody, but became immensely strong and avenged himself in trials of strength. Yet he finally meets his match and picking up a stone from the ground he leaves with the words: "I went out to challenge Usugsaerniarssugssuaq's son Usugsaermiarssunguaq, but he proved to be as hard as this stone". And Kâgssagssuk pressed his black stone between his hands so that its shape became oblong. Afterwards he took a white stone, and crying: "And thus was I" pressed it between his hands so that it was crushed and fell as sand.

The dark, oily stone has been given shapes by Simon Kristoffersen as though pressed out by bare, strong hands. Some characteristic works of recent years are shown in these photographs, but do not do the artist full justice. Like Eskimo sculpture in general, most of these new Greenland carvings are meant to be handled, felt, and looked at from every angle. ◆





The Kristoffersen family of Godthaab took up carving in soapstone in recent years. The son, Simon, shown in this page with some of his work is now pre-eminent. The carving at left is 6¾" high (Coll. Greenland Folk Art, Godthaab). The soapstone group 8¾" high, is part of the Kâgssagssuk legend with the hero struggling with his enemies whom he cracked under his arms. (Coll. Greenland Folk Art, Godthaab.) All the Kristoffersen carvings shown were made in 1966.

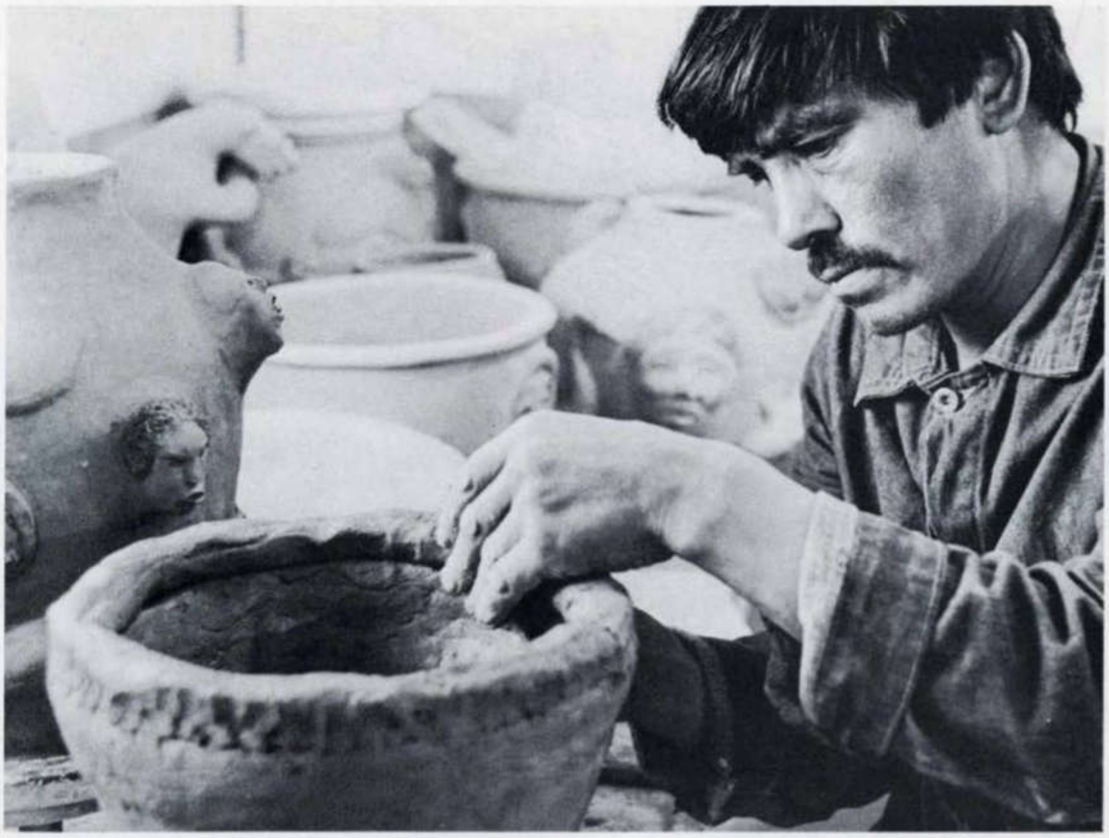
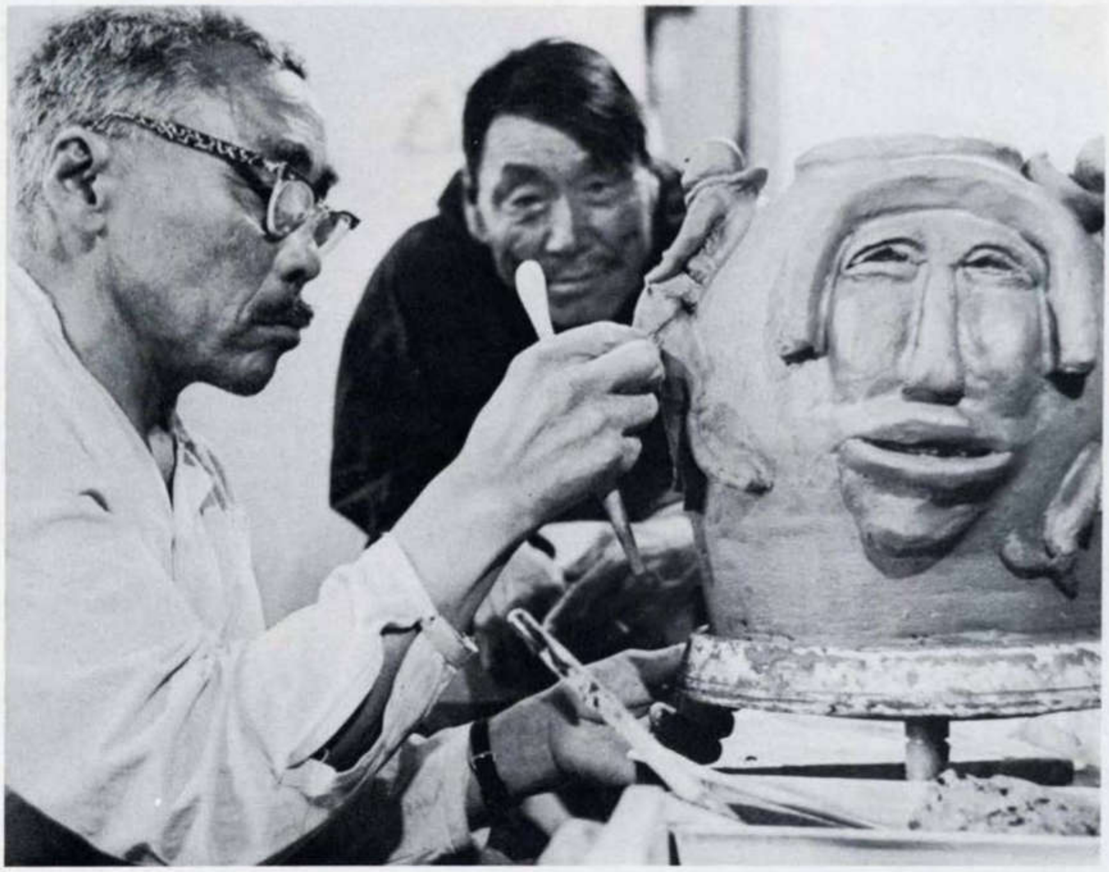


Fig. 1.

The workshop at Rankin Inlet provides facilities for various crafts. Since these photographs were taken last year the potters have moved to a new studio building. In Figure 1, Tegumiak works on a pot, using coil technique. Kuksut (Kukshout) E2-302 in Figure 2 models the clay while carver Tiktak watches. The detail from a fired pot (Fig. 3) shows clay and crushed rock texture.

Fig. 2.



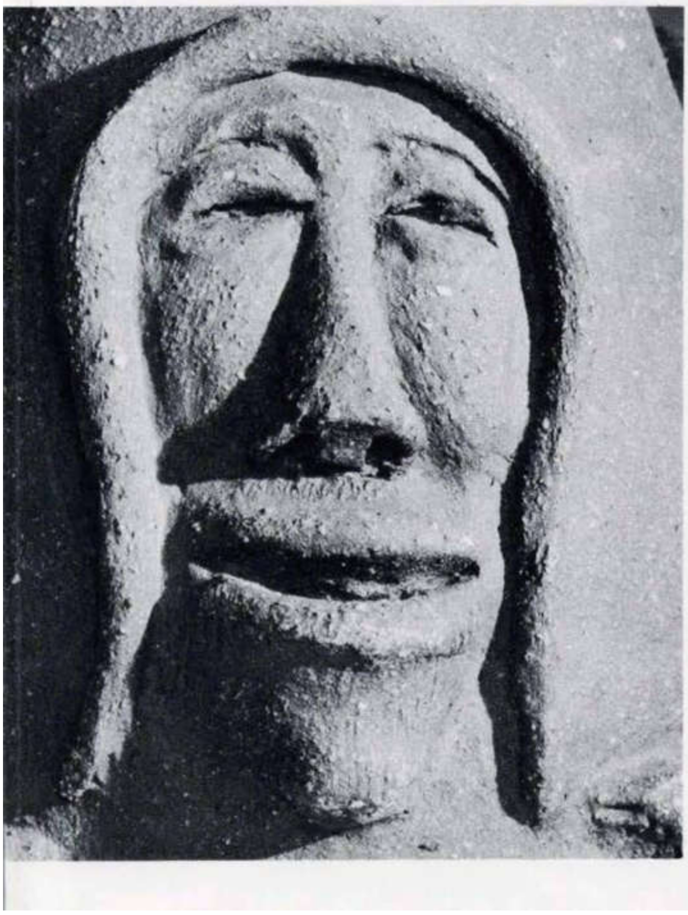
POTTERY IN KEEWATIN

BY HENDRIKA G. NAGY

Teacher of art in a Winnipeg high school who trained in her native Holland and spent some time at Rankin Inlet developing her thesis on Eskimo ceramics.

NO MATERIAL ON EARTH is as plentiful as clay and making things from clay is one of the oldest crafts. When man began to live a settled life and ceased to be a wanderer, a desire for a large number of household vessels stimulated him to discover and explore the possibilities of clay as a material for making relatively strong containers for storing grain and cooking food. How man first discovered that firing clay shapes makes them resistant to water, so they would no longer lose their shape when getting wet, is still obscure. There are several theories and one suggests that clay was used to line baskets in which grains or seeds were stored. When such baskets were discarded and thrown in a fire, the clay lining underwent the usual physical and chemical change, and assumed a stony character; no longer would it dissolve in water. A wide range of possibilities was revealed.

Fig. 3..



Surprising though it may seem, even Eskimos have made pottery for over two thousand years. I am saying "even" Eskimos, because for most of the year the ground in the Arctic is covered with snow and frozen rock hard, and yet, during their short summer, time would be found for digging up clay, preparing a suitable mixture from it with addition of fine sand, gravel, and often caribou hair or ptarmigan feathers. The last two ingredients were added for two reasons; first, to lend some cohesion in shaping the vessels, as some of the clay mixtures were not very plastic, and second, because they help to "open" the clay body somewhat and prevent cracking and warping in the drying process. In the firing these organic materials burn out, but they leave their mark in the form of very fine holes, similar to the traces left by burnt out straw in some brick. If the clay was of a very short and crumbly consistency, seal blood was mixed with it to make it more plastic. Kilns were unknown, all firing was done in open fires, the most primitive way of making clay hold shape permanently.

Explorers of the Western Arctic such as E. W. Nelson in the 19th century, and Vilhjalmur Stefansson in the first decades of the 20th century, actually saw some pottery being made and also received descriptions of ways of making it from older Eskimo residents. But, as pottery making among Eskimos died out early this century, the number of people who actually saw it done is becoming increasingly smaller. European metal kettles and pots took the place of the carved stone and indigenous clay vessels.

Since Eskimos have lived in settled communities around the coasts of Alaska and the extreme eastern parts of Siberia for several thousand years, great quantities of potsherds have been found at most of the sites where archaeological investigations were carried out. The character of the pottery indicates connections with the ceramic traditions of the prehistoric ware of Kamchatka, the Kuriles, and Japan. Methods and styles were most probably handed from one people to another.

Although the prehistoric and protohistoric ware was essentially utilitarian, there is still an amazing variety in shapes, textures, and styles of decoration. No matter how primitive the methods of working and firing, and how rigorous the climate, man has an inborn desire to combine utility with beauty. The finest pottery existed in southern Alaska; as one goes farther north, it becomes coarser and more lightly fired. Following the archaeological sites eastward, fewer sherds appear to have been fired; instead, pots were simply allowed to harden and air-dry and were then smeared with oil until well saturated to render them impervious to moisture. Since clay, merely dried, is quite fragile, relatively few sherds have survived in recogniz-

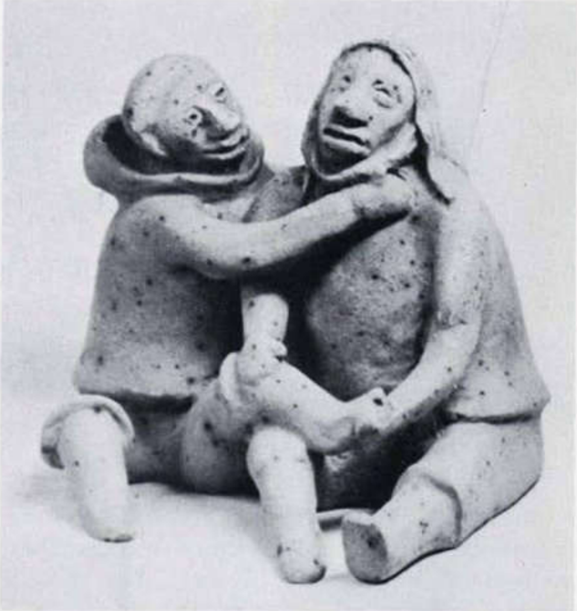


Fig. 4.

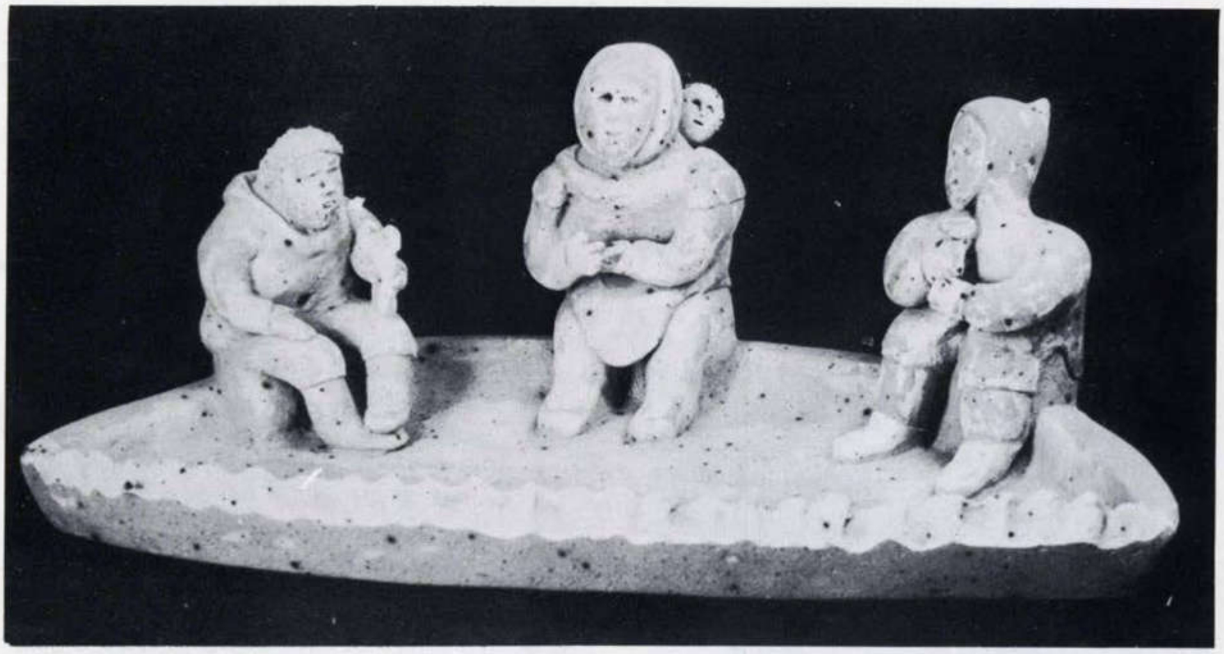


Fig. 5.

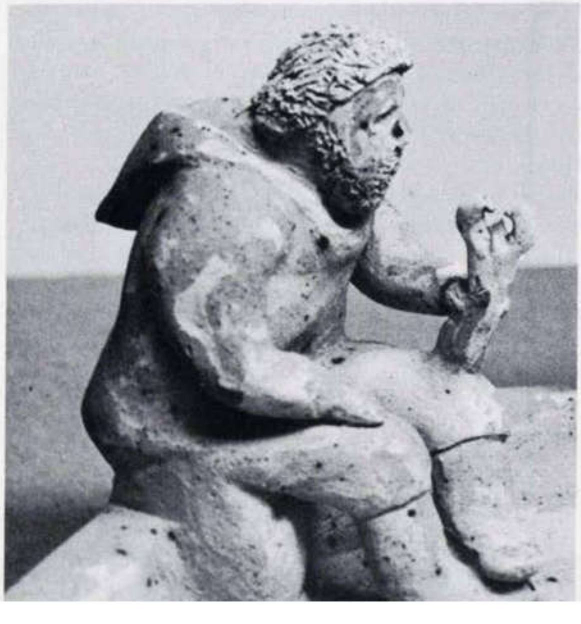
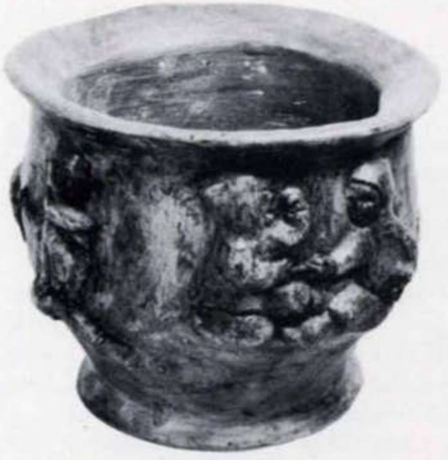


Fig. 4. Husband and wife by Kuksut (Kukshout) in unglazed pottery is 9" high.

Fig. 5. The family group by Kappi sits on the rim of an object like a kudlik or oil lamp in which the fluted edge may represent the warming flame. Detail of one of the figures is shown at left.



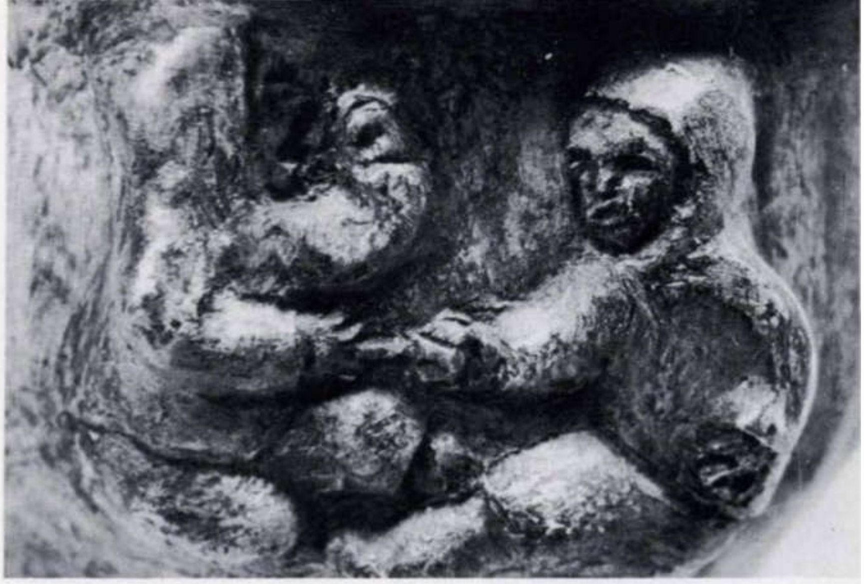


Fig. 6. An urn by Panieqorniak (Paniguniark E3-13) is decorated with a finger-pulling game.

able condition, and thus it is hard to determine whether pots were used extensively or sporadically in the Central and Eastern Arctic. East of Alaska potsherds have been found at Cape Parry, Anderson River, Malerualik on King William Island, Resolute Bay on Cornwallis Island, Naujan (Repulse Bay) and at Crystall II (Frobisher Bay). On the basis of investigations carried out so far, the easternmost limit of Eskimo pottery appears to be the head of Frobisher Bay. All the finds of sherds in the Central and Eastern Arctic were identified as belonging to the Thule culture, which spread eastward from Alaska from about 900 A.D. to approximately 1700 A.D. In Alaska some of the pottery remains date back to the ancient Old Bering Sea culture from long before our era.

Since 1963 pottery making, coupled with ceramic sculpture, has been revived at Rankin Inlet in the District of Keewatin, on the west coast of Hudson Bay. For three years the Eskimo artists experimented to master the art, aided by Claude Grenier, the Craft Development Officer at Rankin Inlet.

A nickel mine which operated for five years had drawn a large number of people to the area. When it closed in 1962, the Eskimo part of the population in particular met with hard times. Many left to work elsewhere, but of those who stayed, a large number began to take part in the Craft Development Program which has become such a remarkable success. The work done in clay is truly amazing. Especially since the potters have begun to use a local clay mixed with particles of crushed local rock has the work taken on a unique character. Glaze is not applied, and with such excellent textured clay-bodies as they have developed, glaze is quite unnecessary. None of the sculptural details become obscured when the actual clay surface is left exposed.

During August of 1966, I was able to visit Rankin Inlet. It was my first visit to the north and I vividly remember the almost pure Prussian blue of the Arctic waters under the clear sky, the little white ships in the harbour, and the remarkable largeness of a human against a landscape without trees, where the little waxy-leafed tundra plants look up to the visitor with seeming curiosity.

In the craft shop (Figs. 1, 2) I saw the Eskimo artists at work either carving in stone or working in the new medium, clay, with which none had had any previous experience. If the visitor does not make himself unduly conspicuous, work continues undisturbed, often accompanied by song. As the song tells of life on the tundra and the sea, one's eye wanders over the pottery and one

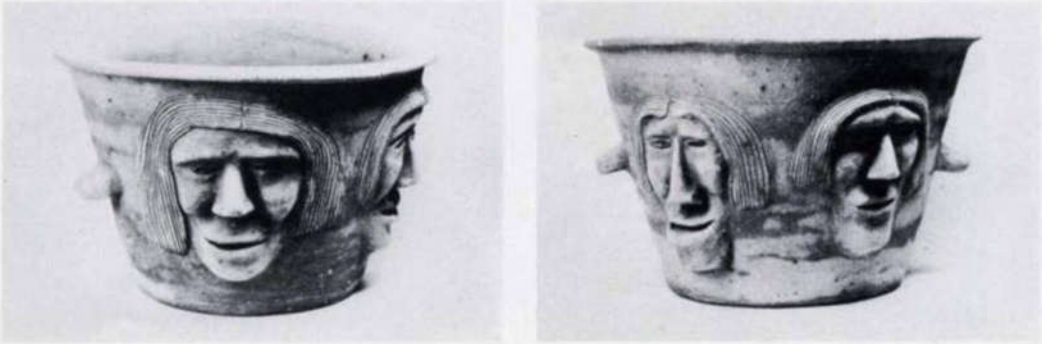


Fig. 7. Two views of a bowl by Anaruak.

sees a rich portrayal of Arctic life. Man, family and friendship are of supreme importance. In traditional times, when the Central Eskimos led wandering lives, these were the only enduring things.

The "Husband and Wife" piece (Fig. 4) by Kuksut (or Kookshut) shows us the wife as a sturdy dependent woman on whom the husband can rely. She is removing his footwear; looking after a husband's clothes was an important duty for in bitter weather his life depended on the quality and condition of his clothes.

Kappi's "Family Group" (Fig. 5) has been placed on a base in the shape of the traditional blubber lamp with a scalloped edge. Lumps of fat used to be pounded to force the oil out of the tissue, the oil then fed by capillary action a wick of moss put along the straight edge of the lamp. The lamp formed the centre of family life; a bride used to bring one with her into marriage. It gave light and it gave warmth to the dwelling; pots for cooking hung above its flames, and higher above it there was usually a rack for drying clothes. How appropriate to find Kappi's "Family" at the centre of warmth and domestic life.

Games of strength were popular among Eskimos. A pot by Panieqoniark shows two men engaged in a contest of "Finger Pulling" (Fig. 6). The man facing us is obviously determined to maintain his advantage over his opponent, while the other man writhes and roars with pain. It is remarkable how the artist placed the figures with essentially a sideview position into such a shallow space and yet succeeded in making it into a convincing whole with only slight use of foreshortenings.

One of Anaruak's most outstanding pieces is the large "Bowl With Four Faces" (Figs. 7a, b). The form of the decoration, the modelling of the faces, is merged beautifully with the wall of the pot. It is not applied to the pot, but worked into the piece and integrated with it.

Hakuluk's "Head" (Figs. 9a, b) is magnificent; bold, vigorous modelling with fine and sensitive surface treatment. The hair has the quality of a beautiful pattern, each line carefully drawn. Figure 11 shows a jar detail.

Animals have always been essential to the Eskimos for their survival. In Eskimo mythology and art they occupy an equally prominent place as in daily life. Many of the older Eskimo artists have first hand experience in hunting the larger Arctic animals, such as the muskoxen, which used to be more abundant. Only he who has felt the thrill and challenge in hunting these mighty creatures with their massive heads and enormous horns, could convey such nostalgia to the observer, as does Qavik (or Kavik) with his "Urn With Muskoxen" (Fig. 8).

Also those Arctic creatures which did not necessarily serve as sources of food often appear as subject matter

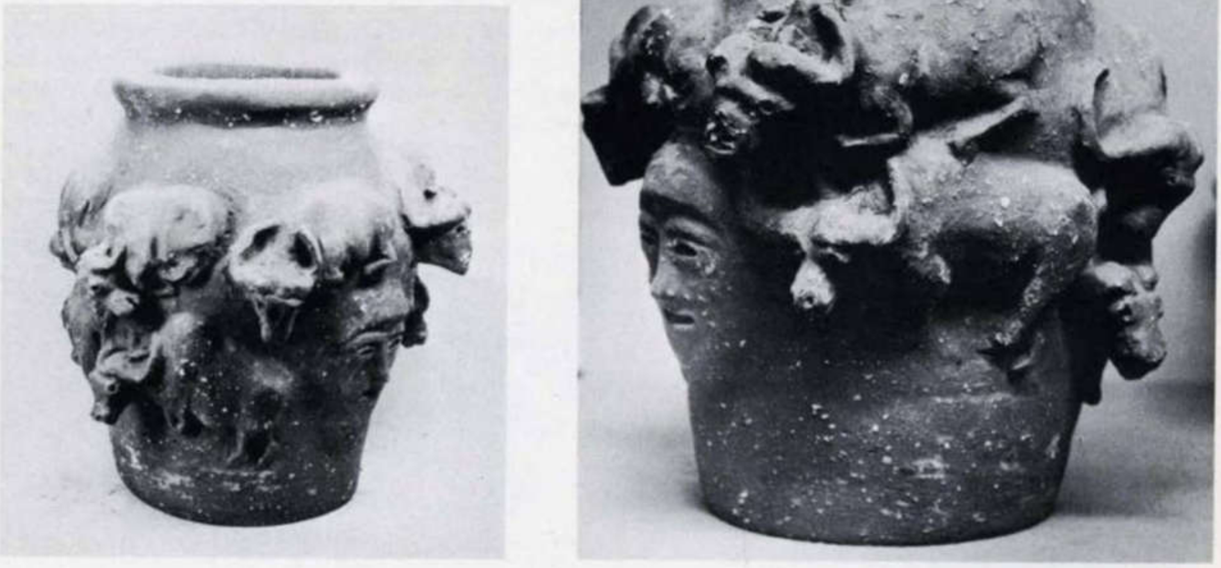


Fig. 8. Jar with muskoxen and human faces by Kavik (Qavik) E2-290, successful 70-year-old carver of soapstone who has taken up the new medium.

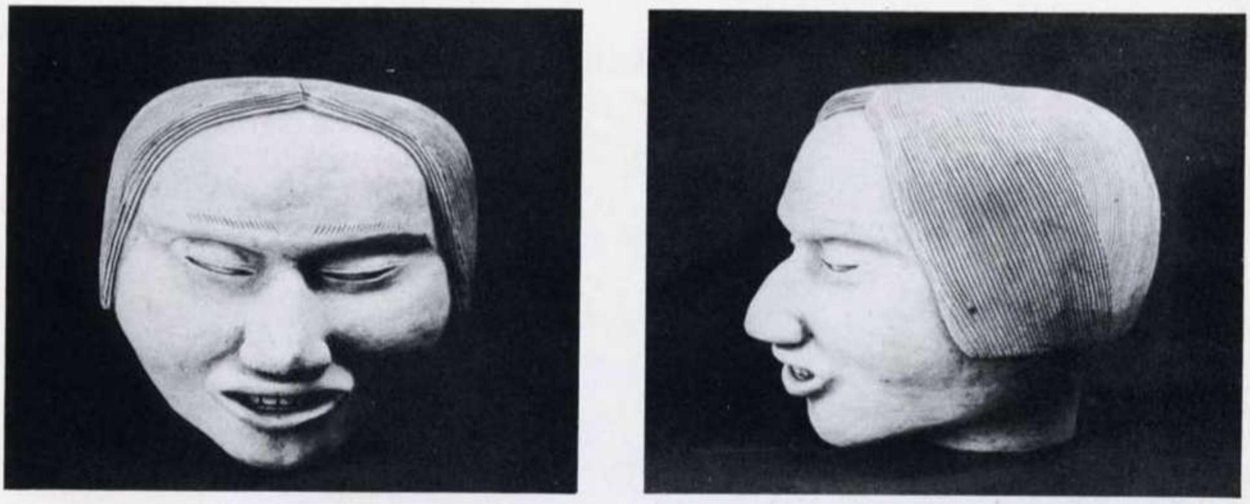


Fig. 9. Ceramic head by Hakaluk (Hakulu) E3-1 shown in two views.

and are portrayed with equal insight and sensitivity, as we can see in the "Two Owls" (Fig. 10) gazing over each other's backs into the distance in a form of crossing diagonals. The textured surface, though not the result of an attempt at naturalistic representation of feathers, nevertheless expresses the shape and colour pattern of the birds very well; a simple and original solution was found by the artist.

Some of the ceramic pieces are anecdotal, some are monumental, and some have a touch of folk art about them. But no matter in what style they were created, all speak with joy of life in the Arctic. They vividly portray aspects of traditional Eskimo life and values with freshness and variety.

This spring the experimental phase of the Rankin Ceramic Project came to a close, and the project entered a new and exciting phase, that of participation by the Canadian public. An exhibition opened in Toronto for the month of March. No doubt it will soon be possible to buy pieces of this pottery. The craft centre at Rankin Inlet is preparing to accommodate a greater output. A larger kiln is being designed, and the new craft shop will afford more working space.

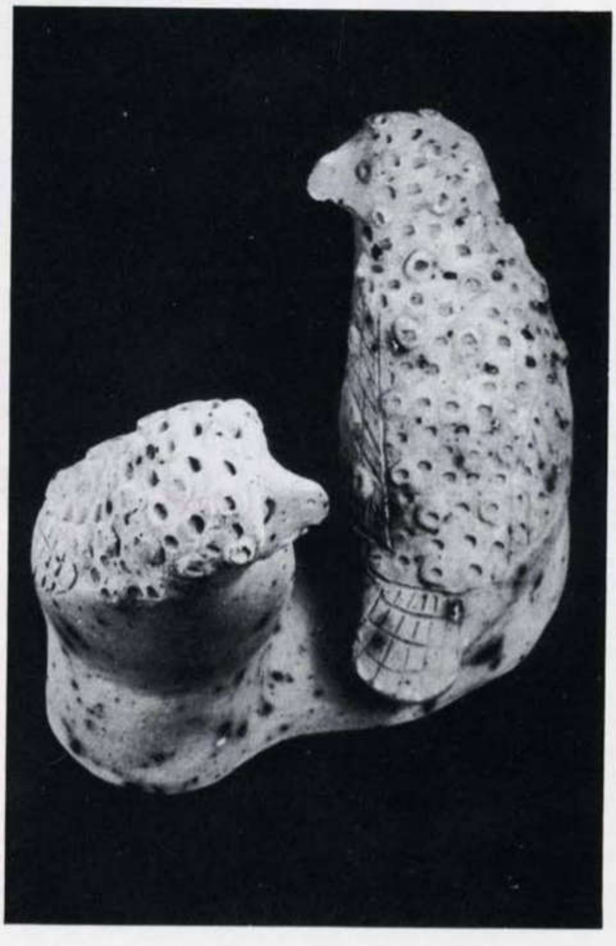
The Rankin Inlet artists must have felt great satisfaction at seeing the results of their experiment placed before the public. As well as a creator, art requires an audience to flourish; the craft centre at Rankin will respond to stimulus that public recognition generates. Their pottery may capture as warm and enduring a place in the hearts of art lovers as have the other Eskimo arts. ◆

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express her thanks for assistance given by Professor and Mrs Robert Williamson of Rankin Inlet with whom she stayed.

Photographs by: Fred Bruemmer, Figs. 1, 2, 5b, 8b; National Film Board—Chris Lund, 3, 11; H. G. Nagy, 4, 5a, 6, 7, 8a, 9, 10.

Fig. 10. Two birds by Angutitua (Angutetuar) W1-231 who is also a skilful worker in soapstone.



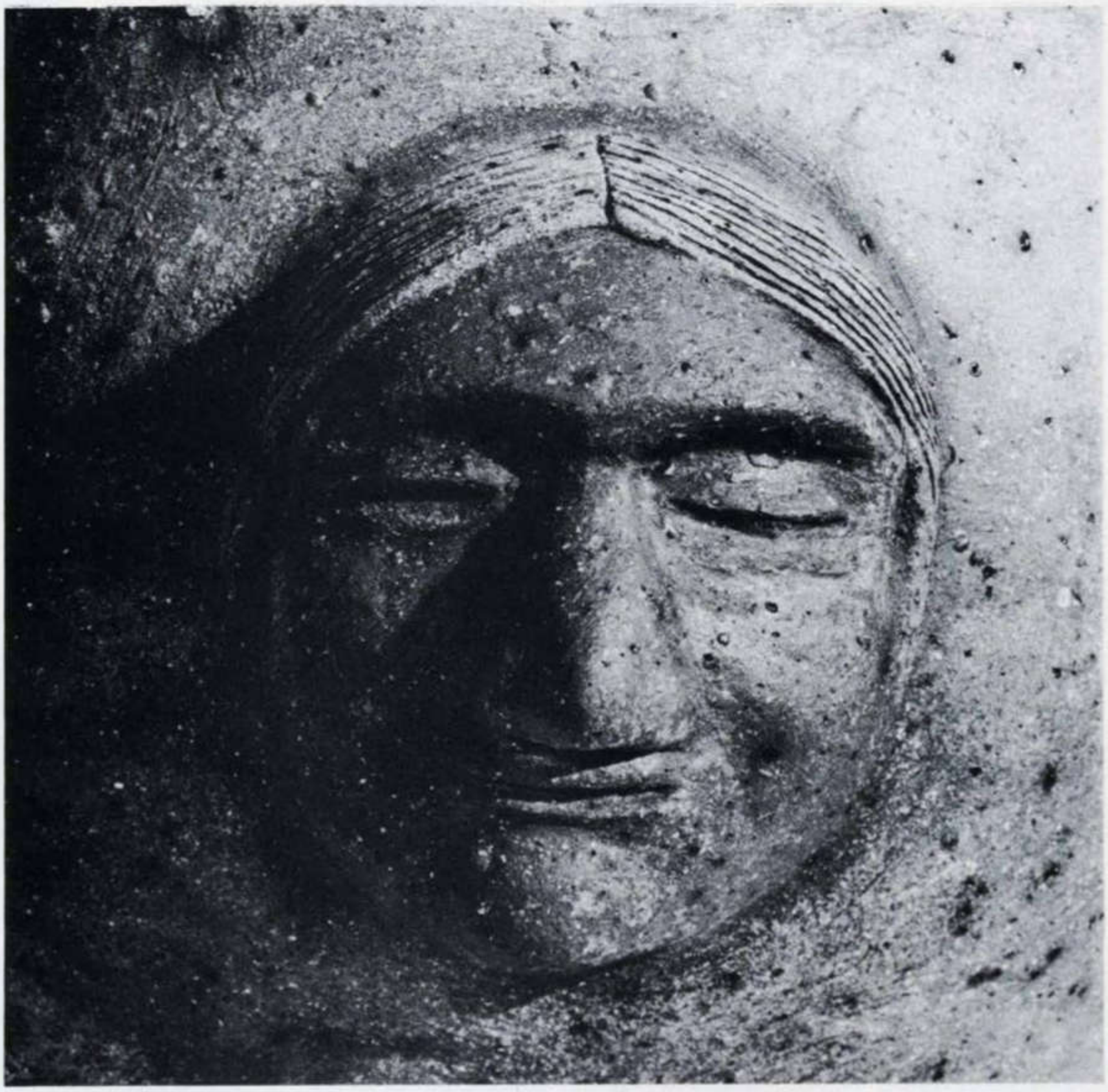


Fig. 11. Detail of earthenware jar by Hakaluk of Rankin Inlet.

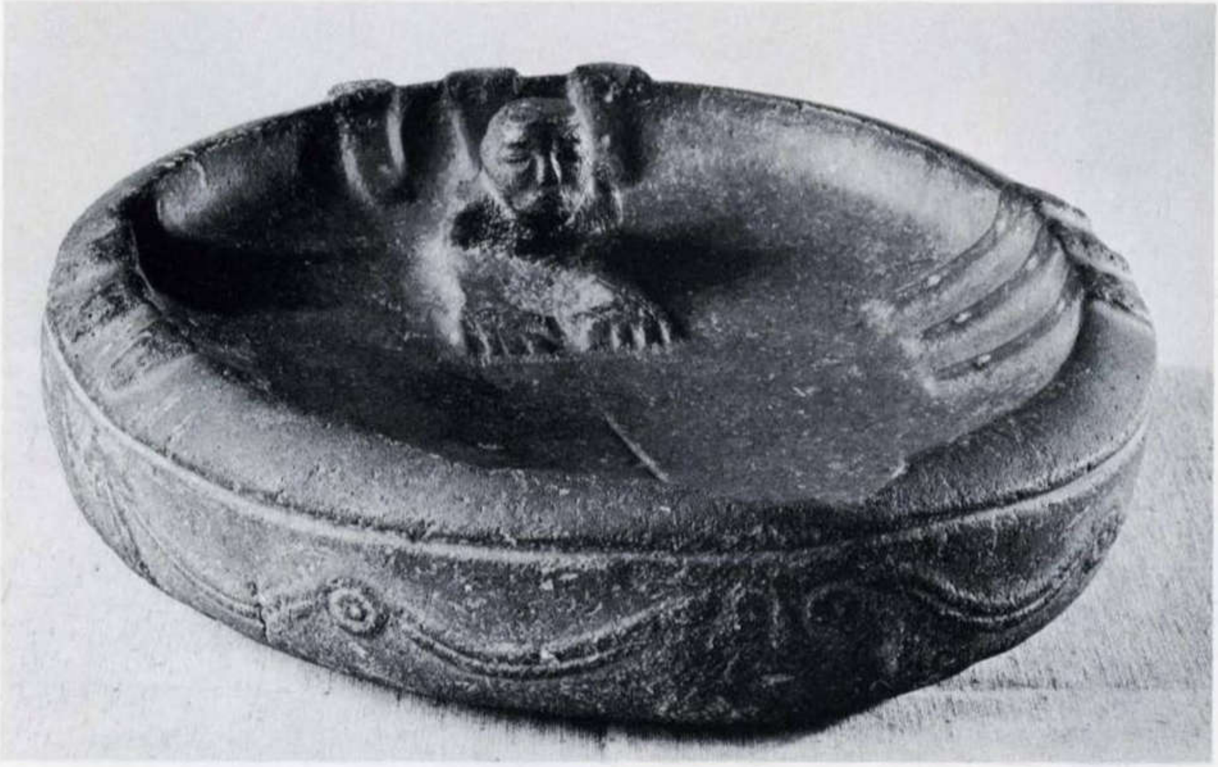


Fig. 1. Stone lamp from Kenai Peninsula, a type found only in the Cook Inlet and Kodiak Island area.

Prehistoric Art of the Western Eskimo

BY ROBERT E. ACKERMAN

Professor in Anthropology at Washington State University who has done extensive field work in Alaska since 1956; specially interested in ethno-archaeology and the continuum of prehistory through to the modern Eskimo in Alaska.

TO THE WEST of the great mass of Canada, an appendage of the New World reaches out towards Asia. Alaska, the land of the Western Eskimo and interior Athapascan Indian is a vast meeting ground for Asian and American cultures. Here, on the wind swept coasts and up the interior river valleys and upland ranges, the Western Eskimo on both sides of the Bering Strait trafficked in a cultural exchange that broke down the barriers of ecological zones and cultural isolates.

It was perhaps the distinctiveness of the different environmental regions of this area that gave the life of the Western Eskimo its characteristic stamp. The plentiful and varied resources of the sea and the land permitted a cultural elaboration quite unlike that of the Eskimo in Canada. Large villages, some of which were encircled with a palisade, raiding which appeared to assume the character of warfare in some areas, extensive trading, rich men, elaborate ceremonial rounds which involved large numbers of people, lineage crests, incipient clan structure and the like occasion the comment that these people are a different kind of Eskimo.

Even in the past then, these were not an isolated people, but a people well tuned to the changing fashions of a yesterday world. For the prehistorian, this yesterday

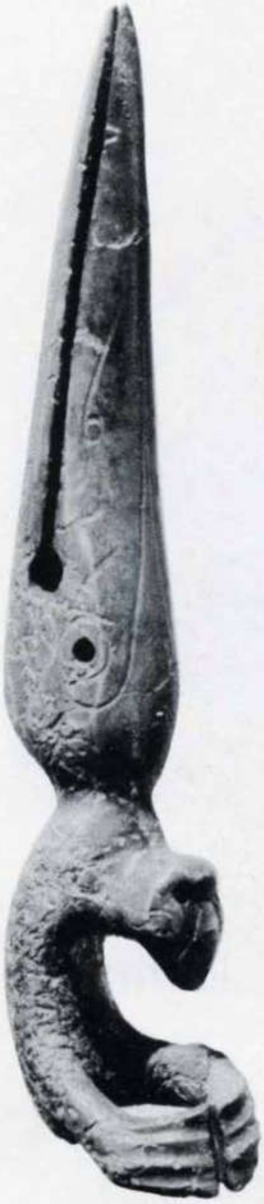
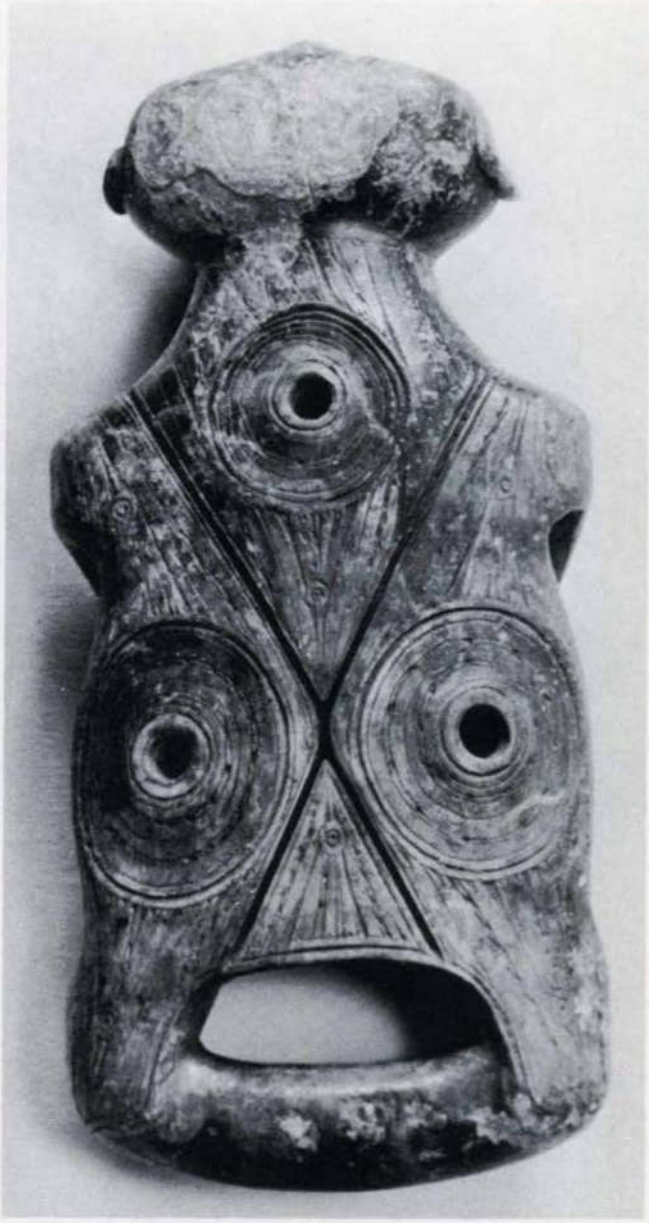


Fig. 2. Composite figure from Ipiutak burial at Point Hope, shown actual size.

Fig. 3. Human figure from old Bering Sea-Okvik burial at Uelen, Chukchi Peninsula, Siberia and (b) right, dorsal surface of the same figure.



(b)

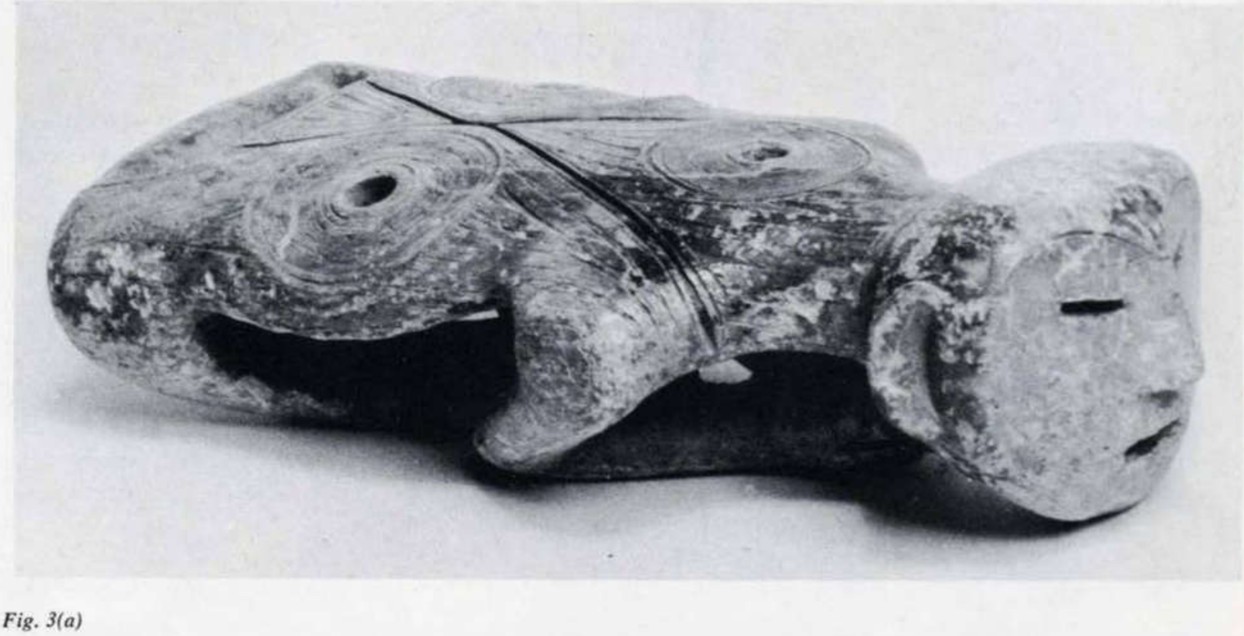


Fig. 3(a)

world quickly deepens into the more distant past. Time merges into myth, and people into a handful of artifacts. From these time fragments of human behaviour the prehistorian weaves a gossamer web, fragile to the touch, but through which a pattern of some faint shadow of the past can be made to appear.

In this brief space then let us go down these ancient byways and inspect in our passing some of these frozen bits of human behaviour. An object made by man is an idea put into concrete reality. The object varies with the intent, one very plain with a very obvious use, the other, covered with a design pattern, the work of many hours and of questionable purpose. Since there is much to admire, and there are many unsolved questions surrounding these more fanciful productions, such will be presented as momentary glimpses into the past life of the Western Eskimo.

Rising from the bottom of the interior of the stone lamp (Figure 1) is a squat figure with bulging eyes, hair closely cropped, and arms outstretched towards the wick ledge as if in supplication to a wavering flame. Along the edge, three groups of animal-like forms lean out from the interior. At the front edge is a gargoyle-like portrayal flanked by streaming ribbons. Lamps similar to this one were found in the Cook Inlet areas by collectors. These came to the attention of Alden Mason and then Frederica de Laguna. The region in which these lamps were found was occupied by the Athapascan Indians in the modern period. It was known that Indians didn't make stone lamps, but that the Eskimo of Canada did. De Laguna's excavations in the Cook Inlet area indicated that these lamps though a rare item did mark a late Eskimo occupation prior to the movement of the Indians into

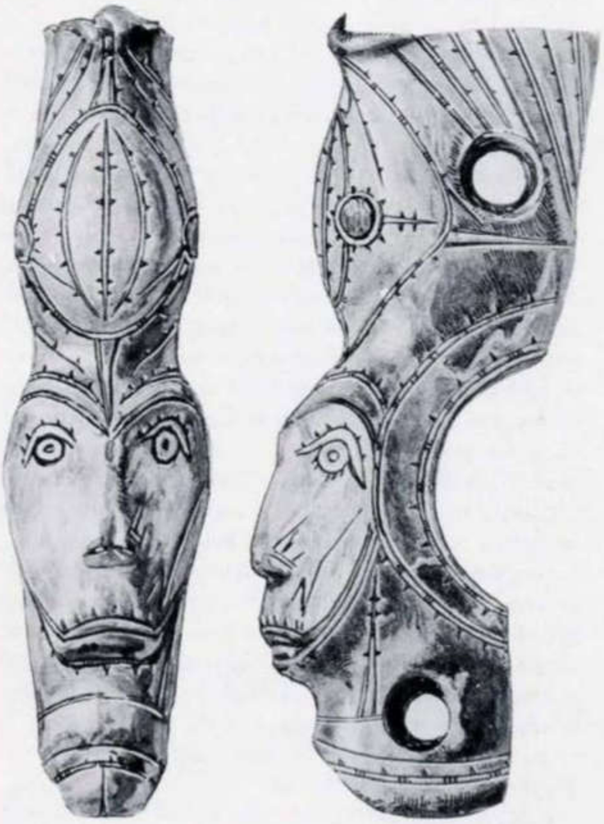
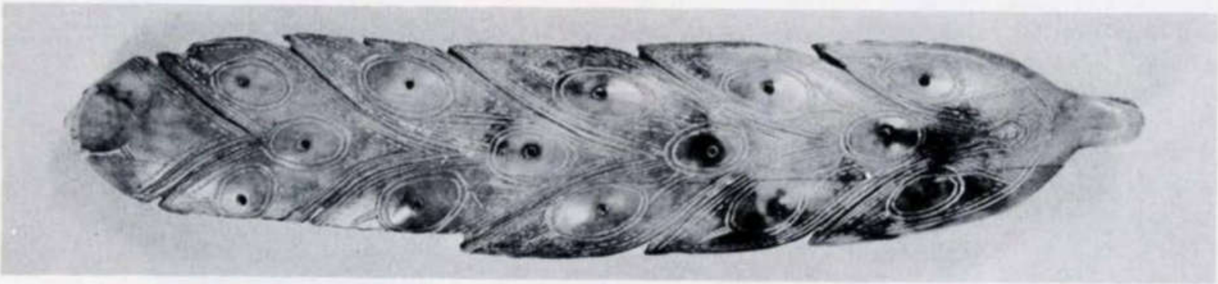


Fig. 4. Two views of a drum handle from Little Diomede Island.



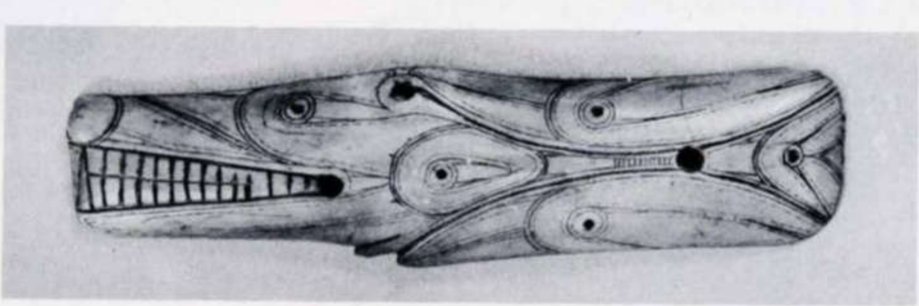


Fig. 5. Pail handle from the Miyowagh site on St. Lawrence Island.

Fig. 6. Possibly an amulet, also from the Miyowagh site on St. Lawrence Island.

the area. As an art form this style of lamp functioned as a fine chronological indicator, and brought about new insights into the prehistory of southern Alaska.

In the world of man and nature, death is seldom a sought-for companion. Man seeks to ease the pain and hasten the departed on his way with a variety of grave gifts. Two objects (Figures 2 and 3) are such examples. The first is an ivory figure illustrating the combination of bird (beak), man (head in centre of body), and sea mammal (flippers). The figure came from a grave at the Ipiutak site, Point Hope. It is not possible to determine the relationship of the three entities in the piece, but birds, particularly loons were important in the belief system of the Eskimo. Bird figures were sewn onto the shaman's coat and were considered good guardian spirits. Such a familiar thus may have accompanied the deceased on his last journey. The crouching figure of a man (3a-b) comes from the Old Bering Sea-Okvik cemetery at Uelen, Chukchi Peninsula. The dorsal surface is covered with concentric circles with a central hole for an inset plug. A complex of spurred lines radiate towards the circles. Underneath, the legs of the figure have been shown as folded forward, the arms placed against the chest, and the hands pressed to the chin. This is the flexed burial position, common to many parts of the Arctic. The piece is appropriate to its setting, but the fuller context is undetermined. Stylistically both pieces date to the beginning of the Christian era.

It is probably during this time period that the most elaborate and robust form of artistry in Eskimo carving can be found. The Old Bering Sea-Okvik and Ipiutak material is thus unsurpassed. The next four pieces, all of which are decorated in the Old Bering Sea-Okvik style will illustrate very aptly this claim. The finely executed drum handle from Little Diomede Island (Figure 4), the pail handle and amulet (?) from St Lawrence Island (Figures 5 and 6), and the charming figure with its Mona Lisa smile from Punuk Island near St Lawrence Island (Figure 7) are examples of workmanship seldom excelled. The skill of the artist is seen in the eye-like protuberances of the pail handle (Figure 5) which resembles in form a peacock's tail. The eye or joint indicators behind the carnivore's head (Figure 6) can be seen as parts of complex animal forms. The haughty mien of the individual with facial markings on the drum handle (Figure 4) may come close to a personal portrayal as certainly could be said for the "Okvik Madonna".

To the south a fine piece of workmanship was found on Kodiak Island (Figure 8). The central human face is flanked by two whales and further out on the margins by two sea birds in profile. Protruding from the back of the object is a T shaped handle which could have been

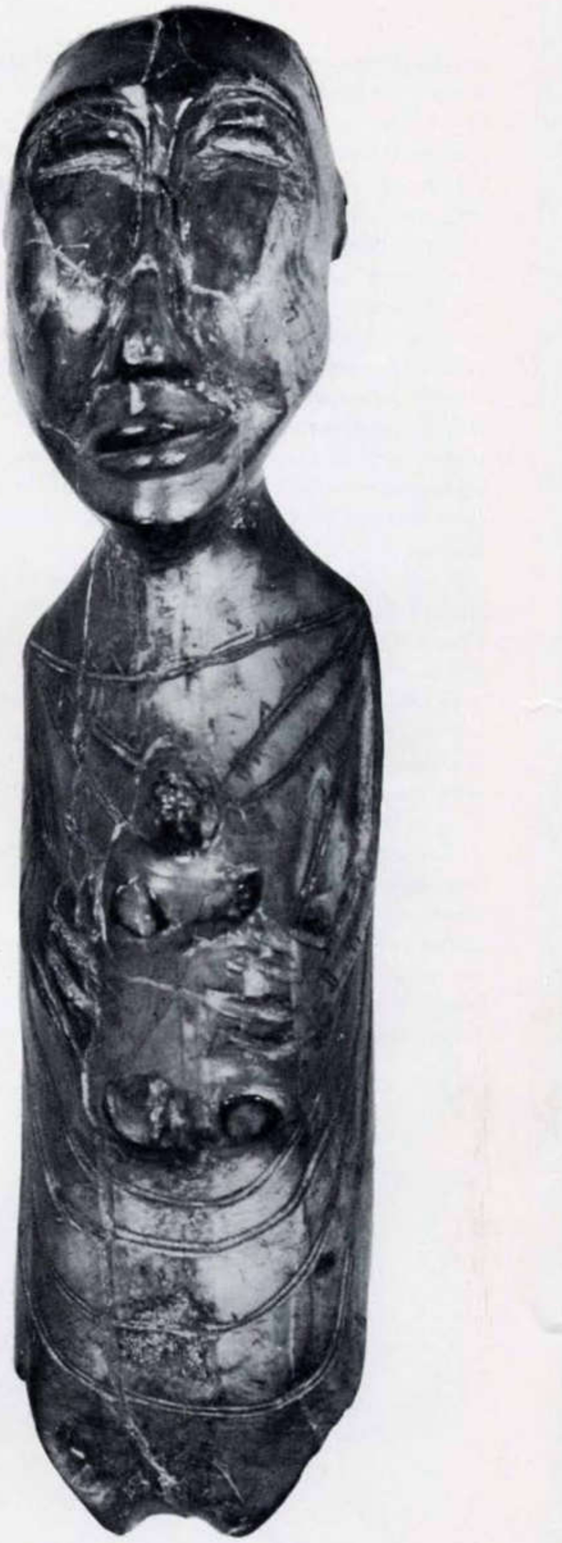


Fig. 7. The figure known as the "Okvik Madonna" about 6¾" high, from Okvik site on Punuk Island, near St. Lawrence Island.

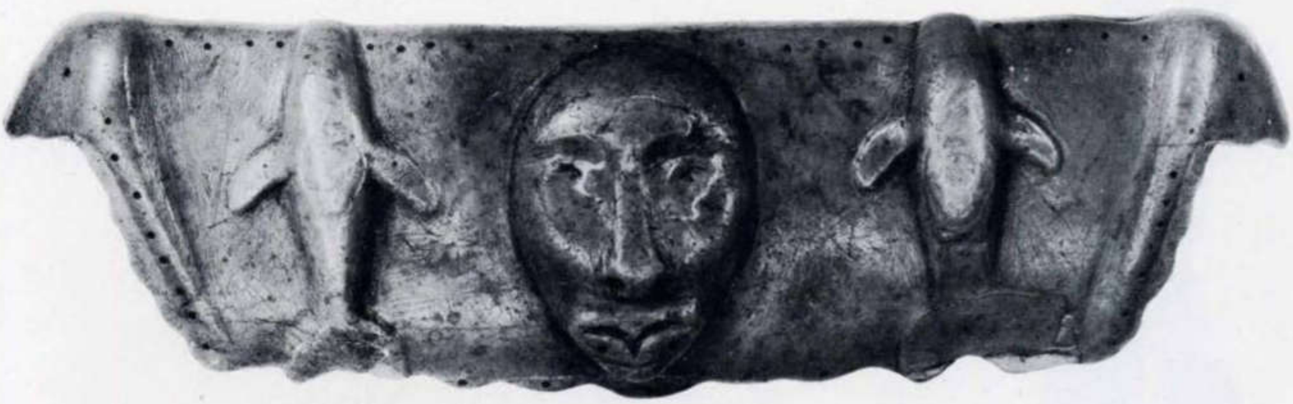


Fig. 8. Possibly a dance piece, from the Uyak site on Kodiak Island.

held in the hand or gripped with the teeth. Such an object was probably part of a celebrant's regalia in the whaling ceremonies.

Following the Old Bering Sea, Okvik, Ipiutak art styles is a geometric form that preserved in part the style of the earlier design pattern but loses the originality of composition. This Punuk-Birnirk art style is briefly illustrated by the central harpoon head in Figure 9. By late prehistoric times, most of the design elements have disappeared. The animals who were said to be attracted by the beauty of the implement certainly had to find other forms of satisfaction in the modern period. With the effects of missionary effort on the belief system, and the use of firearms in hunting (generally undecorated), art is for the tourist.

The Eskimo, his ideas of the world about him, and the objects he makes should be seen as an integrated system of behaviour. As one aspect of this system changes so will others. Since these artistic achievements made in a variety of changing settings lend themselves to pattern analysis and serve as chronological indicators perhaps they too might yield some data on how the Eskimo modified his adaptations to an environment of his own making, the realm of his own belief system.

◆

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following institutions for illustrations in this article: University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Fig. 1; American Museum of Natural History, New York, Fig. 2; Institute of Ethnography, Moscow, Fig. 3; United States National Museum, Washington, Figs. 4, 5, 6, 8; University of Alaska Museum, Fig. 7; Washington State University, Fig. 9.

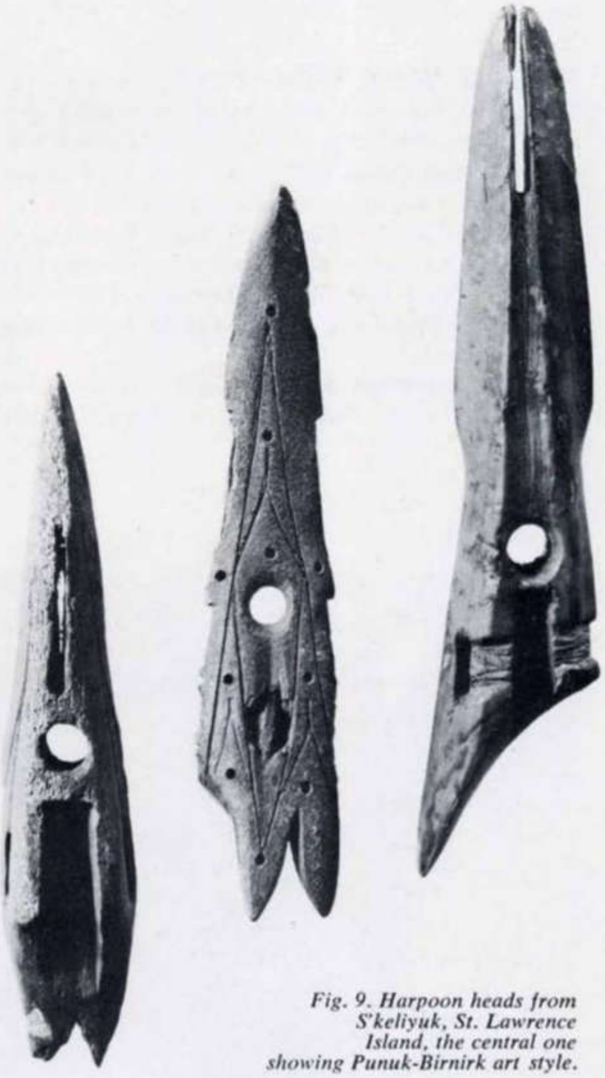
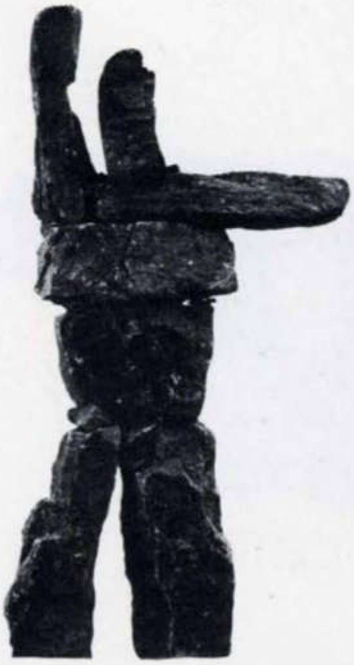


Fig. 9. Harpoon heads from S'keliyuk, St. Lawrence Island, the central one showing Punuk-Birnirk art style.



A COLLECTOR'S VIEW

BY CHARLES GIMPEL

London art dealer and collector who put on the first Eskimo exhibition in his gallery of contemporary art in 1953. Since then he has paid visits to the Arctic and arranged major exhibitions in Paris and Zurich as well as others in museums in Great Britain.

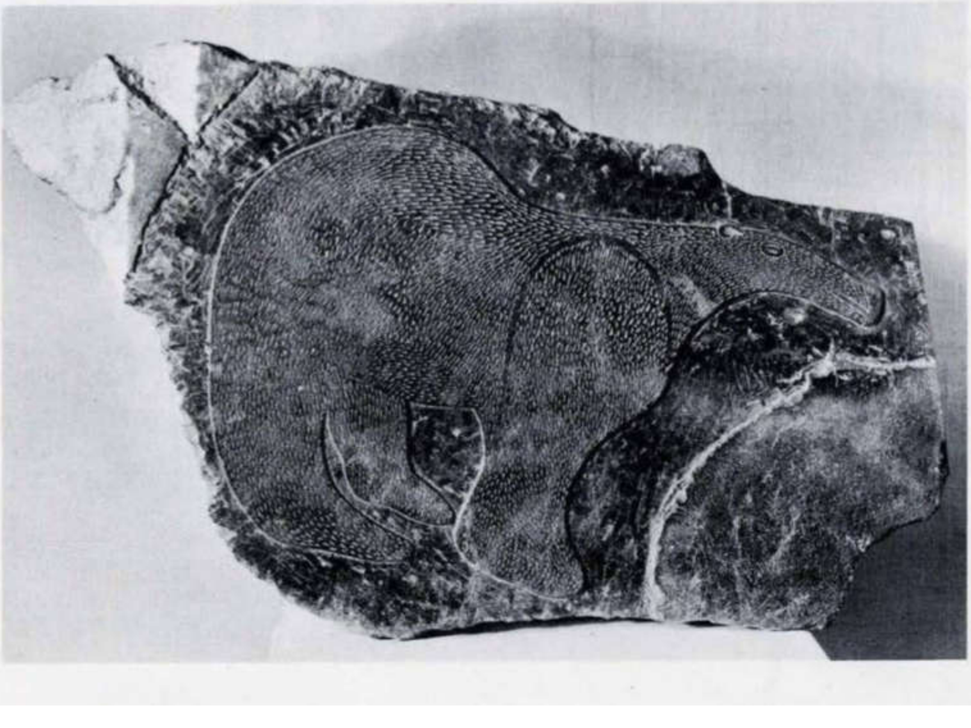
MY AFFECTION FOR THE ESKIMO, my interest in his economy, my travels to the Arctic are all well known to my friends and to the art world. This might lead some to imagine that I bring to the study of the carvings and the stone cuts a most uncritical and prejudiced eye.

However, this is by no means the case. My training as a dealer and a collector obliges me to be as discerning, as demanding in this field of art as in any other. I know only too well that much which comes out of the Arctic is very poor indeed.

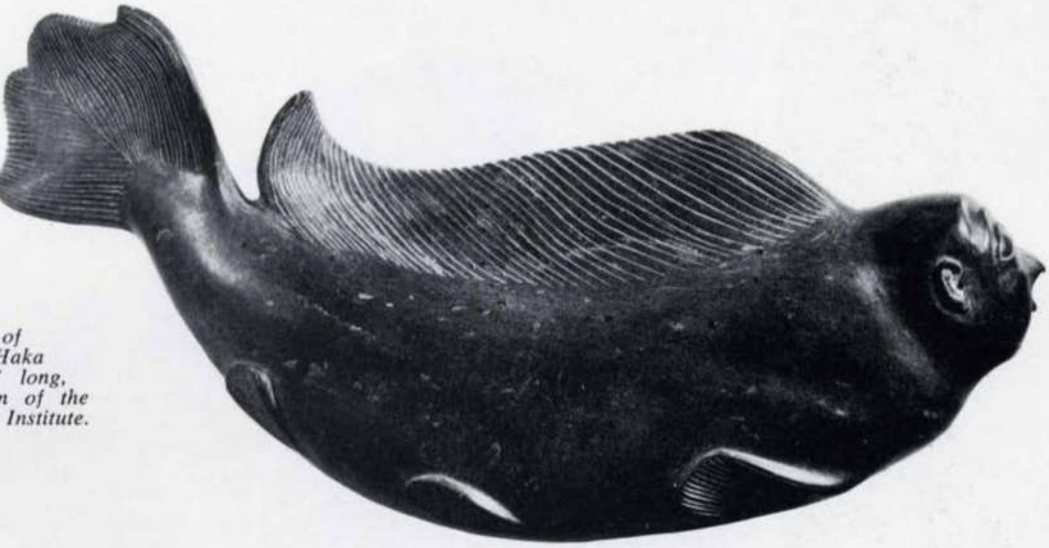
But the percentage of good work is similar, if not higher, than in New York, London, and Paris Certainly of all that is produced in those cities under the name of art, ninety per cent is trash.

It is my experience over the last fifteen years that some of the exhibitions held in London, Paris, Zurich have made an impact on the connoisseurs. Critics, collectors, museum curators begin to consider them seriously in the context of contemporary work done by other artists in other countries.

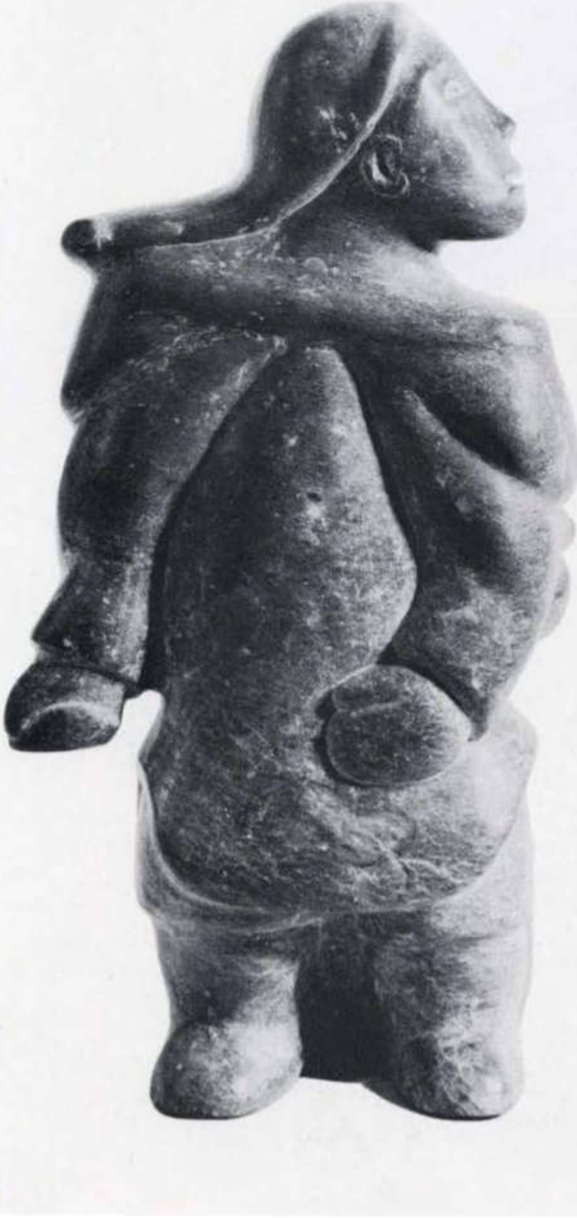
In the Western world a few important collectors are genuinely moved by the work of Eskimo artists. When they find a piece of top quality they are happy to include it in their collections—for instance Leigh Block and



Soapstone block with design by Lucy E7-1068 of Cape Dorset from which prints were made in 1961, now in the Tate Gallery, London.
CHARLES GIMPEL PHOTOS.



Fish-woman, symbolic of the sea goddess, by Haka E7-1101, c.1960, 17" long, now in the collection of the Scott Polar Research Institute.



Woman by Haka, 1966, 16" high, in the collection of Joseph Hirshhorn.

Joseph Hirshhorn in the United States, two of the world's greatest collectors, have Eskimo carvings; this is an honour not often accorded to many Canadian sculptors.

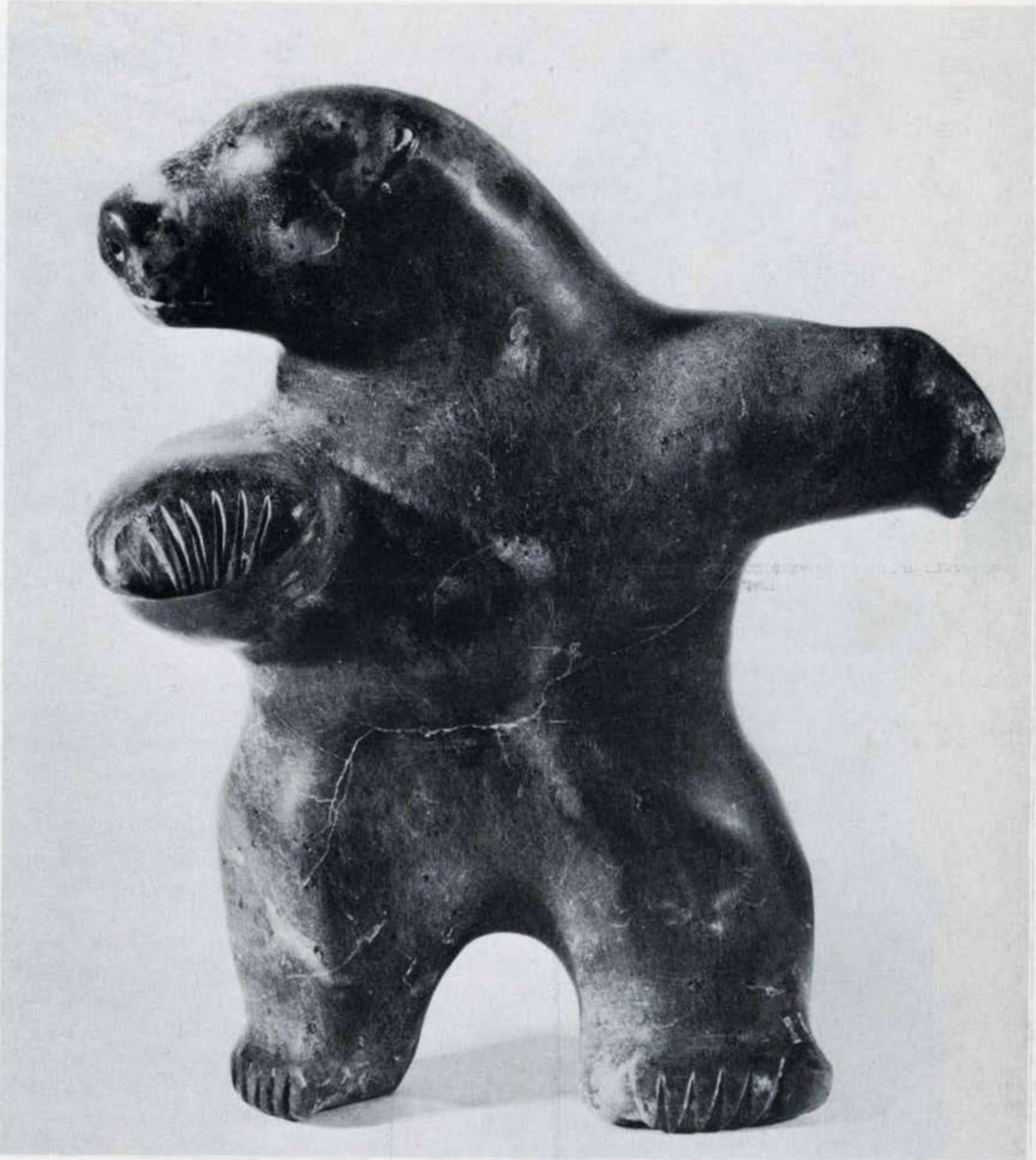
This applies also to museums, usually slower to react to a new form of art. The Tate Gallery in London has a wonderful piece and the Kroller Muller Museum in Holland, known to the world for their Van Goghs and their contemporary sculpture, have also just acquired a seal by Haka.

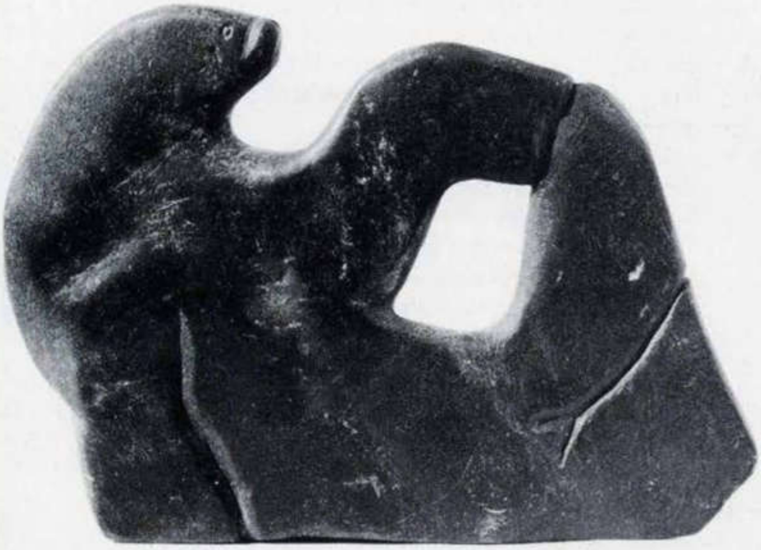
The critics vary in their reactions and perception, but they study the work itself seriously, not necessarily in the context of a separate civilization. Here are some of their comments, selected at random.

David Thompson (formerly of *The Times*) writing in *The Queen* 4 January, 1967: ". . . Their medium is a dark green soapstone, and their subjects are Arctic animals and birds. And from their original tradition of compact forms made to be held snugly in the hand, they have retained a natural sculptural instinct for powerfully solid, rounded and expressive shapes. Now they are learning to draw and make stone-carved prints, and a new spirit-world is making its appearance. . . . One—the picture of a hallucination experienced by a hunter lost on the ice-floes for a week—is a human document as vivid as a mescalin drawing."

Charles S. Spencer, writing in the *New York Times, European Edition*, 27 December, 1966: ". . . Eskimo Soapstone carvings—mysterious, beautiful objects, and their collection clearly a labor of love . . ."

John Fitzmaurice Mills writing in the *Irish Times*, 12 December, 1966, on the stonecuts: ". . . that of the 'Bird of Spring' is of a type of long-eared owl that appears in the north, and has been given a remarkably decorative





Bear by Pouta (Pauta) E7-990 in green soapstone, 1966, 16¾" high, in the collection of Joseph Hirshhorn.

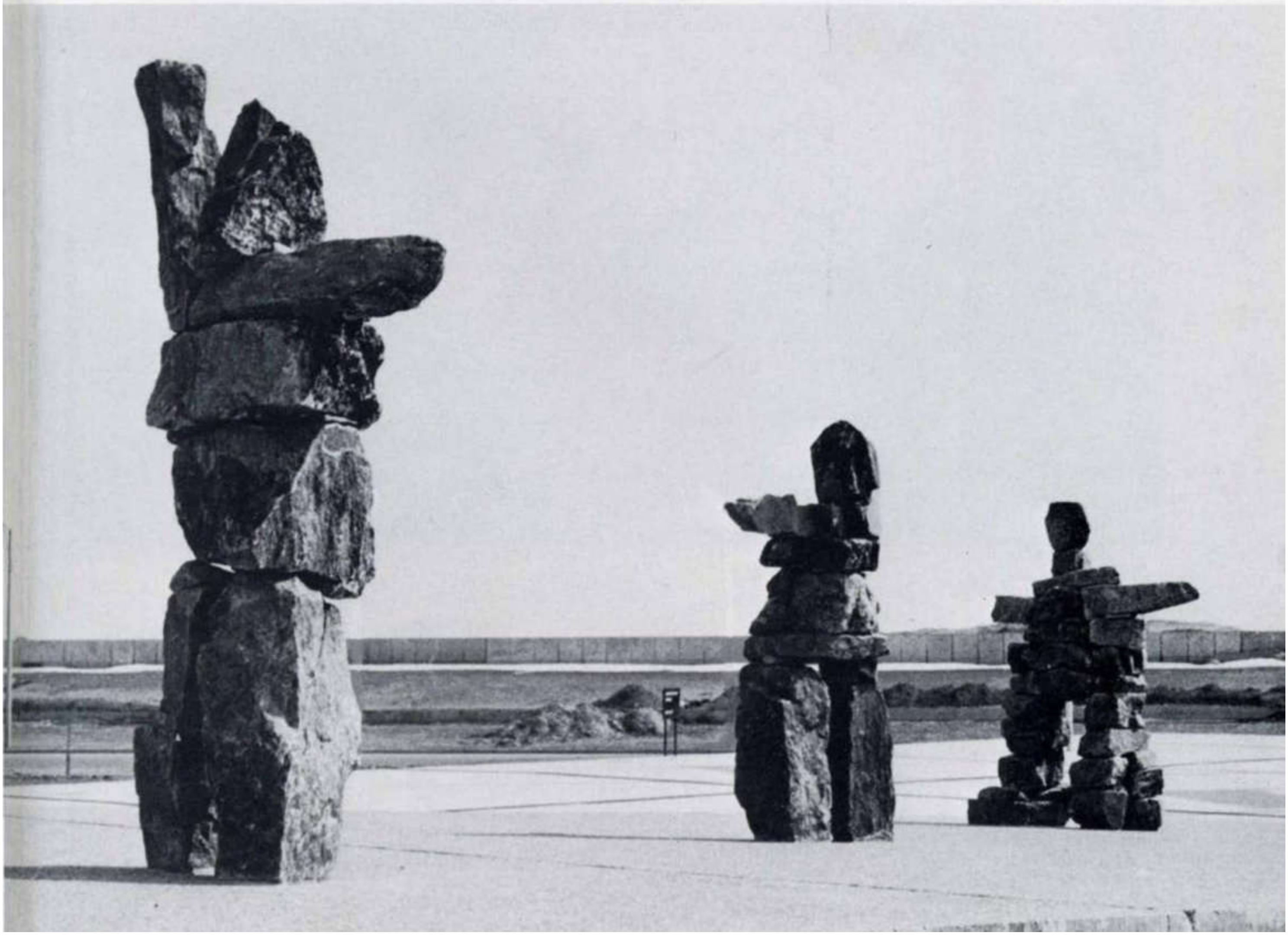
Seal by Haka, 9¼" high, in the collection of The Kroller Muller Museum, Holland.

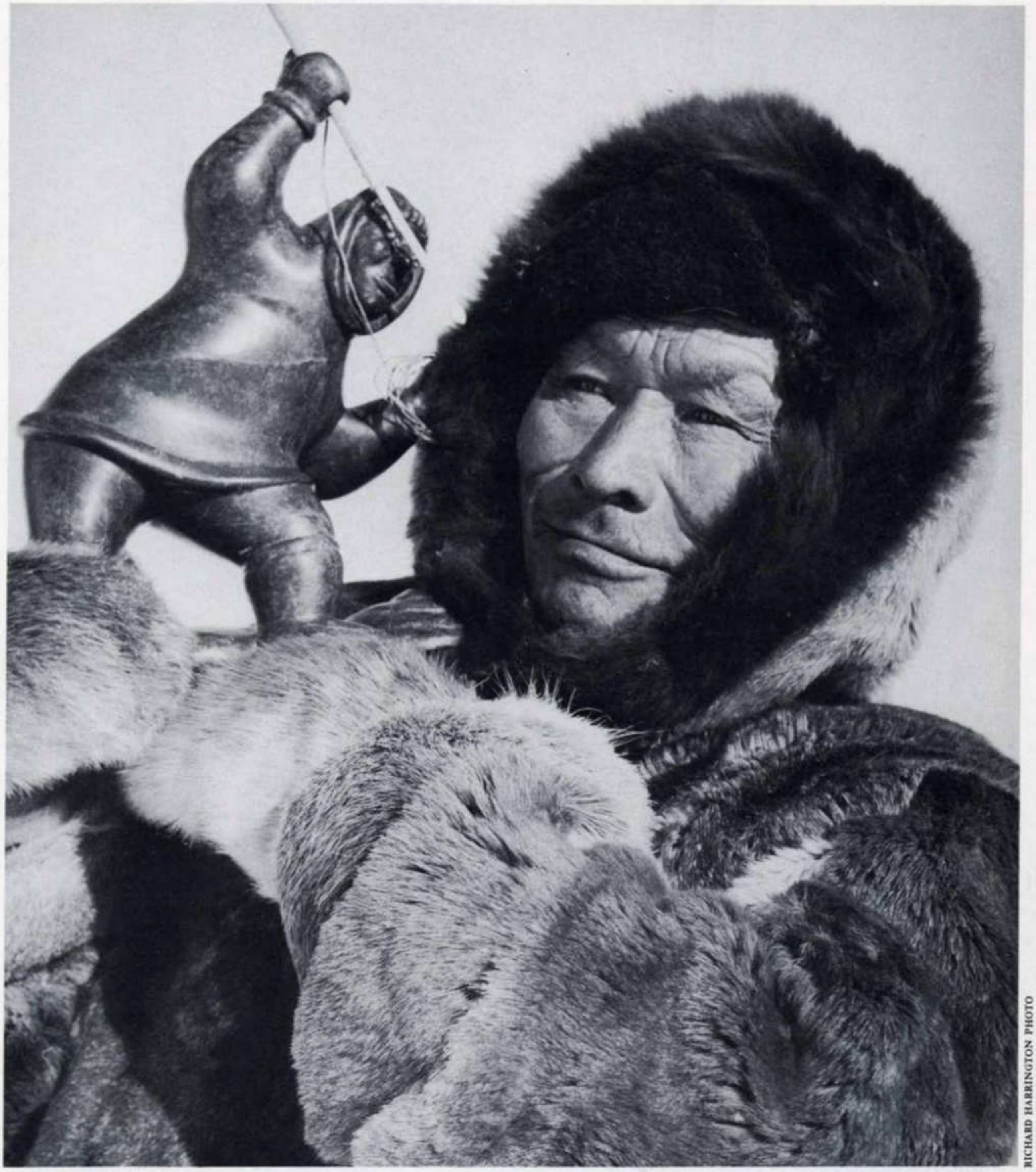
Opposite: Bird by Kenojuak, 1966, 13¼" high. Coll: Charles Gimpel.

Inukshuks at Toronto airport which were originally erected at Cape Dorset under the supervision of Kiakshuk.

treatment, not only in the spread of the wings, but in the placing of the claws and tail. The Eskimo artist, in this case, Eliajah, has appreciated the value of tone in the greying treatment of the wings, contrasting with the forcible black of the body. This was probably done by a slight lowering of the surface of the stone in these areas". And of a soapstone carving, 1964, by Pauloossie: " . . . working in this soft, almost alabaster-like material . . . he has taken full advantage of the colourings of the stone, and, in many cases, the gentle veining—creamy-white, ochre yellows and greens. The figures generally are simplified down, as with this woman, yet they retain strength, life and vigour."

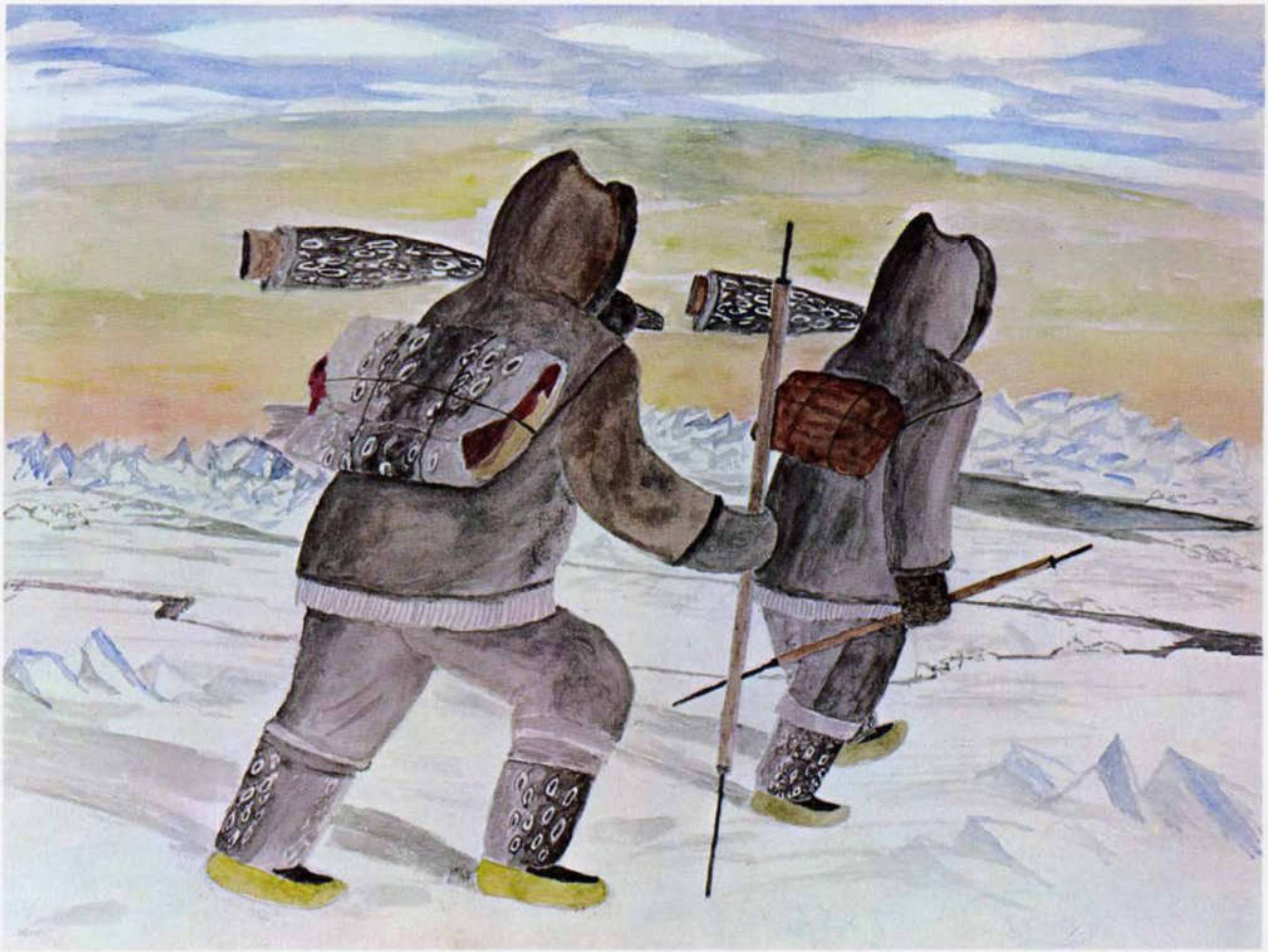
A final word: I have confidence in the best of Eskimo art. Should the Canadian Pavilion at the Venice International Art Biennial exhibit, in 1968, the ten best sculptors from the Arctic, including the Inukshuk from Toronto Airport (the one with the upraised arm, which I consider the best Canadian sculpture I have seen), it would give the art world the opportunity to judge the work in the context of contemporary art. ◆

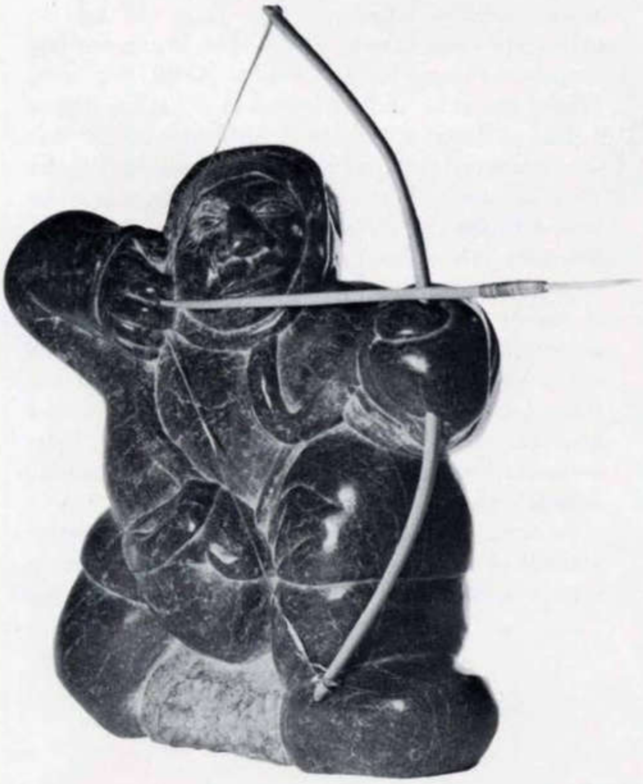




RICHARD HARRINGTON PHOTO

Willia Ningiuk E9-750 of Port Harrison, who has since died, examines a carving in soapstone made by Lucassie Nowayakudluk E9-1620, one of the older carvers of Port Harrison.





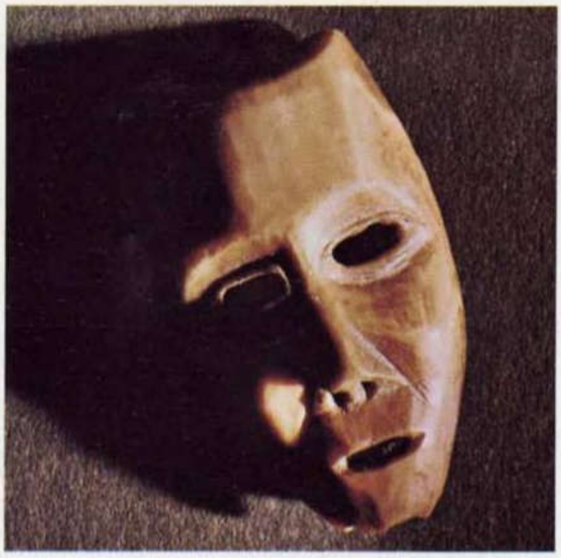
ISA SMILER

Comparatively few Eskimos have attempted water-colours but six or seven years ago Isa Smiler E9-706 whose home is one of the camps near Port Harrison produced a few sketches of which this is an example, reduced from 12 inches wide.

Isa more usually worked in soapstone and The Hunter (left), a massive piece fifteen inches high, is one of his sculptures.

ESKIMO MUSEUM

Two pieces of Dorset culture ivory, a harpoon head 2⅞" high from the middle period c.1000, found near Igloolik and an early maskette 1⅜" high, c.720 B.C. from the Tyara site, Sugluk.



N.M.C. *(see. p. 44)*

DIAMOND JENNESS

BY HENRY B. COLLINS

a tribute by the renowned arctic anthropologist of the Smithsonian Institution.

IT IS APPROPRIATE that this portrait of Dr Diamond Jenness should appear in an issue of *The Beaver* devoted in part to the Dorset culture, that intriguing and still mysterious early Eskimo culture which he first described some forty years ago. In the course of a long and distinguished career that brought him recognition as the leading authority on Canadian Eskimos and Indians, Jenness made only two brief forays into arctic archaeology. But brief though they were, and conducted without fanfare, they brought to light the earliest known Eskimo cultures in both the Eastern and Western Arctic. With perspicacity and insight born of long experience and deep knowledge of the Arctic and its peoples, Jenness proceeded to outline the major problems of Eskimo prehistory, and thus set the course for the archaeological explorations that followed.

In 1926, excavating in frozen village sites at Wales and the Diomede Islands, Bering Strait, at about 3 foot level (as far as the frozen ground permitted him to dig), he found abundant remains of the Thule culture, the supposedly basic Eskimo culture that Mathiassen had recently uncovered in the Canadian Arctic. But while Jenness was on Little Diomede Island an Eskimo digging a cache pit found at a depth of 8 feet an ivory harpoon head of unusual form and decoration. It was quite unlike Thule but similar to several others of unknown age from around Bering Sea which Jenness had seen in museum collections. He realized at once that these elaborately decorated artifacts represented an older, ancestral form of culture, and on the basis of this "mere handful of specimens" he described the Old Bering Sea culture, and as if with foreknowledge postulated its age, relationship to other Eskimo and Old World cultures, its geographical range and probable place of origin. Later investigations have extended but never contravened Jenness's original statements.

Jenness's recognition of the Dorset culture was another example of *multum ex parvo.* It stands as a classic in archaeological discovery, and one made not in the field

and Arctic Archaeology

but in the quiet of his museum office in Ottawa. In 1924 Major L. T. Burwash sent to the National Museum a collection of artifacts excavated by Eskimos at Cape Dorset on Baffin Island and on Coats Island in Hudson Bay. In sorting out the collection Jenness saw immediately that it was a conglomerate consisting of modern Eskimo artifacts mixed with others belonging to the Thule culture and still others that were new and strange. These included many small and delicate harpoon heads and other bone and ivory artifacts that were deeply patinated and typologically different from Thule and modern forms. Jenness described these and the accompanying stone artifacts—also distinctive in form—as those of a new Eskimo culture which he called the Cape Dorset, "an independent culture, contemporaneous in some places with the Thule, in others preceding and probably extinguished by it". His analysis was not a mere definition of the Dorset culture and its age vis-a-vis the Thule. Jenness was able to trace its distribution, and from the forms of the implements alone to reconstruct the food economy and way of life of these earliest known Canadian Eskimos; incidentally, he was also first to express the now generally accepted view that the Dorset and not the Thule Eskimos should be identified with the legendary Tunit people of the Eastern Arctic.

Jenness's views on the Dorset culture did not go unchallenged. Its age and independent status were questioned, and I was one of those who briefly flirted with the idea that this strange culture, which seemed almost out of place in an Arctic setting, was perhaps more Indian than Eskimo. But Jenness's logic prevailed, and now that we know so much more about the Dorset culture and recognize it as the basic, autochthonous Eskimo culture throughout the Eastern Arctic, it seems strange to recall that Jenness was forced to argue repeatedly that this was indeed a genuine Eskimo culture.

As discoverer of the Dorset and Old Bering Sea cultures, Diamond Jenness may truly be hailed as the father of Eskimo archaeology.

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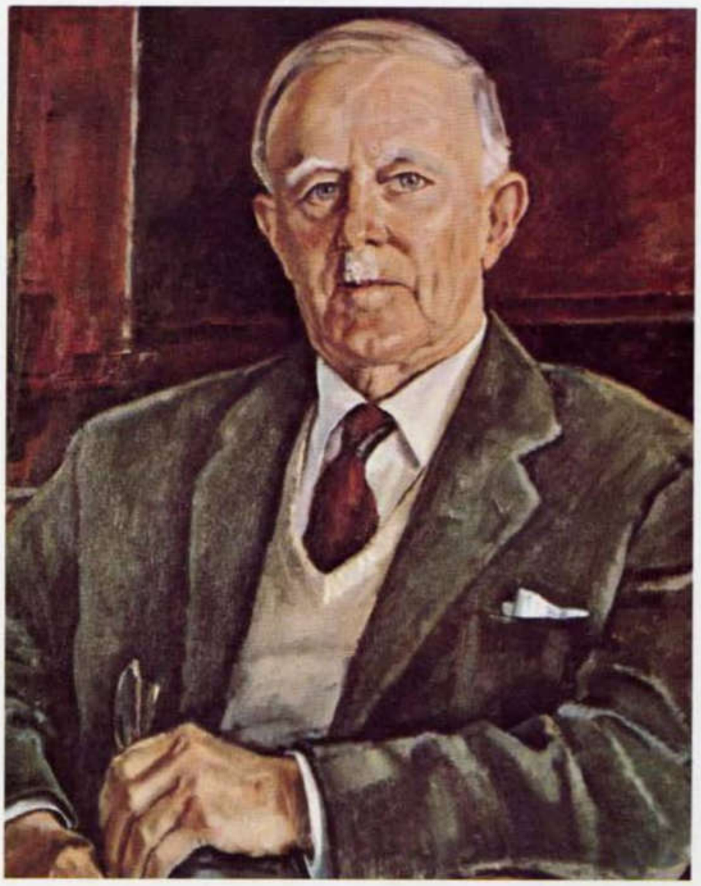


A very modest man, a scholar and a gentleman, quiet-spoken and self-effacing: that is the outward impression of a man of intellectual brilliance, physical courage, and sharp wit who has had a tremendous influence on anthropological studies in Canada and beyond—Diamond Jenness.

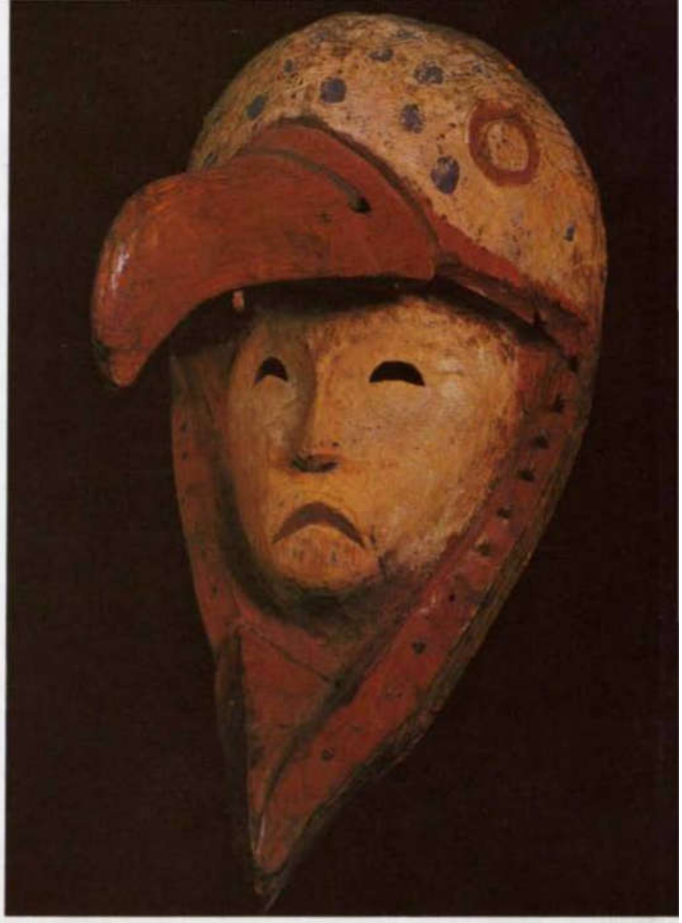
Canada's distinguished anthropologist was born in New Zealand, graduated at Oxford, did his first ethnographic field work in the Pacific Islands, joined the Canadian Arctic Expedition in 1913 for three years in the Arctic. After overseas war service he became chief of the Anthropology Division of the National Museum. Besides proving himself a great eskimologist, Dr Jenness has done field work among various Indian tribes, archaeological work in Newfoundland and Alaska, and written many books and papers. "The Indians of Canada" which he published in 1932 is still the classic on Canadian ethnology and his recent volumes on "Eskimo Administration" are masterly studies which a scientist is kind and able enough to make absorbing to the layman.

The portrait above, painted by Robert Hyndman, was presented to Diamond Jenness on his 80th birthday in 1966 by his friends and colleagues who not only hold him in high esteem but feel for him warm affection.

Alaskan Eskimo Arts and Crafts

BY DOROTHY JEAN RAY

anthropologist and writer who has made a profound study, in the field and through research, of the culture and history of the Eskimos of Alaska.



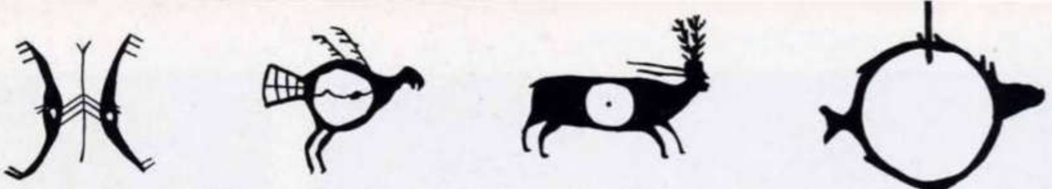
Nineteenth century wooden mask, 15" high, with human face inside bird's immovable beaks.

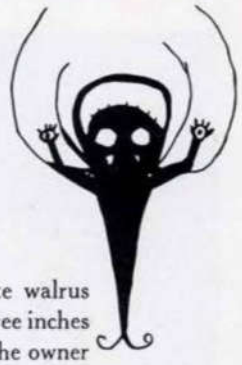
AN ACCIDENT OF HISTORY, the discovery of gold in 1898 near Cape Nome, created an important tourist attraction of Alaska—ivory carvers at work in King Island Village, a small settlement a mile east of the present town of Nome. The rich mineral lands were by coincidence near one of the world's richest walrus grounds where tusks had been used from time immemorial for utilitarian and ornamental purposes. Many Eskimos, particularly from King Island, ninety miles away, were drawn to the mining camp to carve ivory for souvenir hunters. Year after year the King Islanders sailed to the same beach spot where they camped and carved under roomy skin boats, slowly adding to their little village the wooden structures that now serve as their permanent residences and an art centre of the State.

Eskimo art in Alaska has often been equated solely with this ivory carving, but it is only one of many artistic pursuits carried on by the various groups from Point Barrow to the Aleutians. However, the circumstances surrounding the precipitous beginnings of contemporary art among walrus hunters and carvers has placed an emphasis on ivory. Prior to the gold rush, the nineteenth century Eskimo worked in a variety of media—ivory and wood by the men, and basketry and furs by the women. One of the specialties everywhere was graphic design. North of Norton Sound, the artist specialized in representational scenes on ivory, and south of it, in painted figures on wooden utensils, although the materials used were not exclusive to those areas. All Eskimos also made masks, another great art form of that time.

The northern artist recorded in ivory the entire spectrum of everyday and ceremonial life from picking berries on the tundra to a medicine man's performance in the community house, and his imagery gave permanent form to a number of mythological characters and to some of his innermost secrets. His tools cut delicate, infinitesimal lines, or bold, wide gashes into the ivory with confident precision—there was no erasing, no second chance for a slip of the graver—and with rare economy of line he interpreted his knowledge of the human body and of the animals and birds around him. Apparently the small size of the engraved subjects, sometimes only an inch square, has prevented this art form from receiving the recognition it should have, but it formed the basis for much of the ivory work during the twentieth century.

The southern painter confined his designs mainly to representations of mythological beings, animals, and birds on skin drumheads or on wooden platters and spoons that were used ceremonially by the painter or the painter's family. Prior to the coming of Europeans to Alaska, the majority of Eskimo art, with the exception of dolls, buttons, and certain engraved ivory pieces, was religious art. Because most of the sculptured objects, amulets, masks, or paintings, were designed to please spirits or deities that were in some way connected with all-important subsistence activities, the Eskimos would not sell them to outsiders during the earliest years of contact. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why pre-1850 collections were heavily weighted with undecorated household and hunting implements, kayaks, and fur clothing, with a minimum of masks and truly art objects.





Designs on wooden bowls and ladles, that on left from Nushagak, the others from Kuskokwim River.

However, various European and American activities of the latter nineteenth century intensified the unquenchable proclivities of the Eskimo trader, and there is no doubt that events such as commercial whaling (after 1848), the search for Sir John Franklin (1848-54), the Western Union Telegraph Expedition (1865-67), and the establishing of Signal Corps stations (in the 1870s) contributed to the massive output of both ivory engravings and wood paintings at that time. Unlike sculpture, many engraved pieces from the north may never have had religious meaning because of their predominantly secular subjects and the eagerness of owners to sell. Indeed, many ivory engravings were made later on especially for ships that came to St Michael, the old Russian trading post, and to Port Clarence or Kotzebue Sound where they met for mail and provisions.

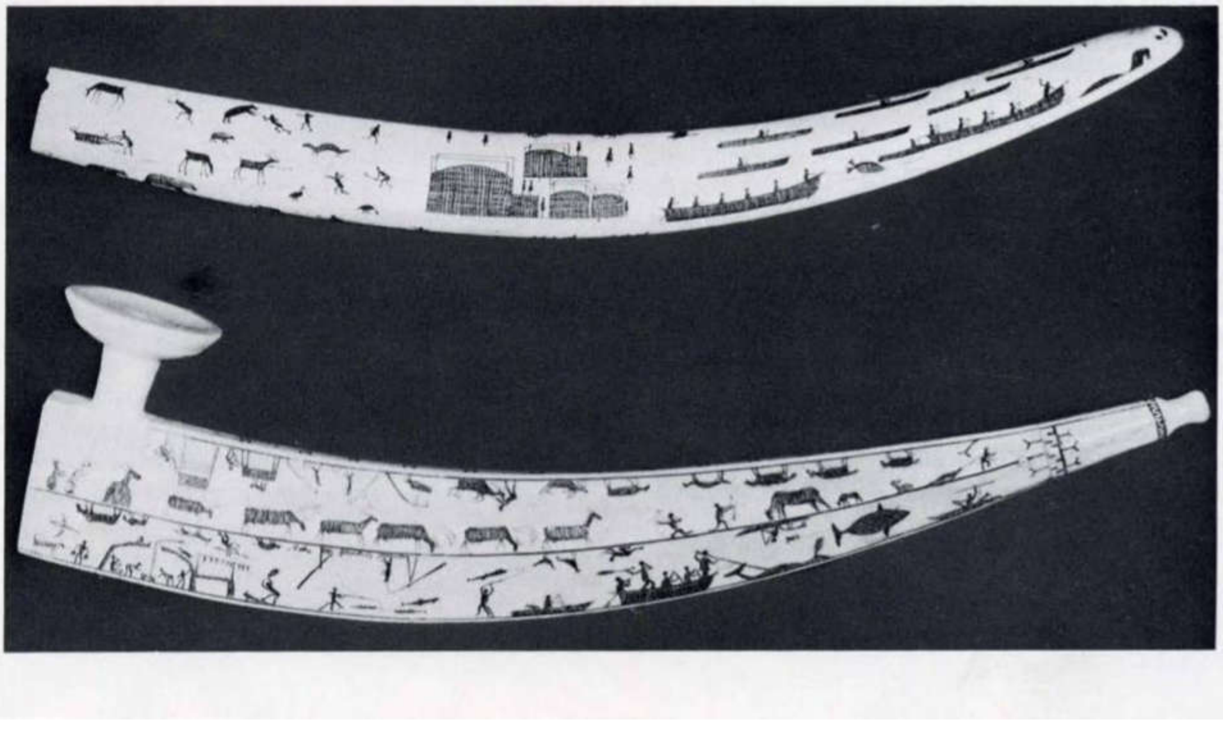
Despite the importance of trading, a prospective buyer would leave empty handed if objects had indispensable religious significance to their owner. For example, in July 1879, A. E. Nordenskiold, captain of the *Vega*, saw two wooden birds with red outstretched wings at Port Clarence, but said that he "endeavoured without success to purchase these tent-idols for a large new felt hat—an article of exchange for which in other cases I could obtain almost anything whatever. A dazzlingly white *ḳayaḳ* of a very elegant shape, on the other hand, I purchased without difficulty for an old felt hat and 500 Remington cartridges."[1]

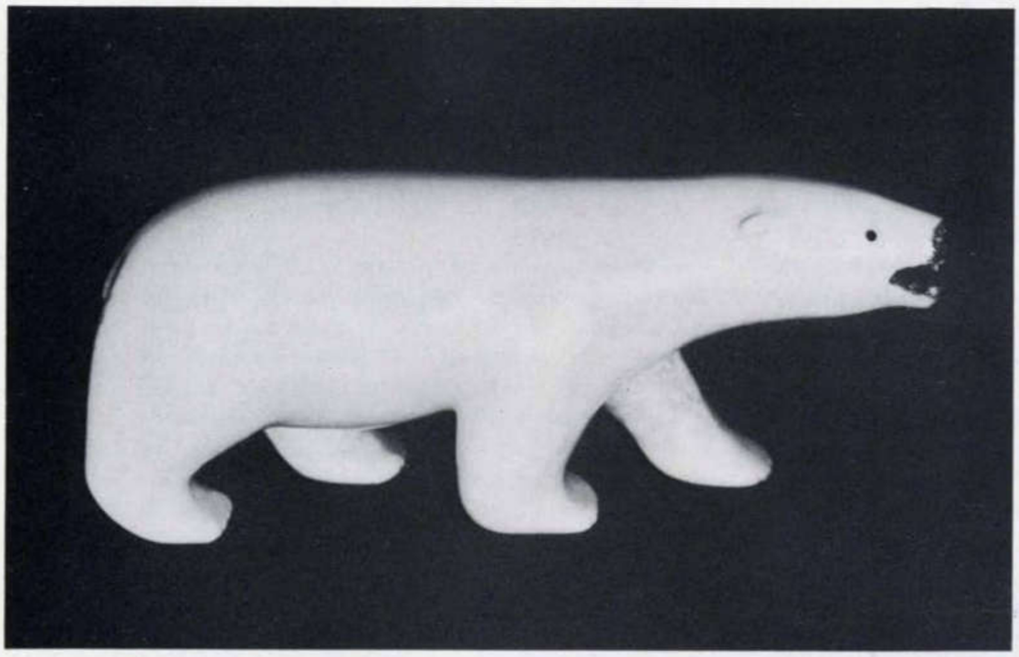
E. W. Nelson in 1881 had a similar experience which he recounts in *The Esḳimo About Bering Strait:* "In Kotzebue sound a young Malemut white-whale hunter came off to the *Corwin* one day and I found hanging from the framework inside his kaiak, just behind the manhole, a curious wooden image [a composite walrus and white whale] about eight inches long and three inches in diameter. . . . I tried to buy the image, but the owner seemed to be alarmed when he found that I had discovered it, and said he would die if he parted with it."

Similar beliefs probably prevented the collection of masks until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Wooden masks of many forms and sizes were made everywhere, usually for ceremonial or religious occasions, but their vitality and meaning toppled with the Eskimo religion, and after the 1900s, they were made only sporadically, and often for sale. Though most masks originated from a shaman's dream or interpretation, and were therefore ideally one-of-a-kind, many duplicates from southwest Alaska in the 1880s and '90s, now found in museums, suggest that the Russian religion had already provided an escape from such limitations.

The long and varied Eskimo preoccupation with the arts did not fail to get the attention of traders and souvenir collectors of the gold rush, and carvers were put to work almost at once. The first decades of contemporary production were devoted principally to engravings on ivory, though differing in style from the nineteenth century, and to the imitation of foreign knick-knacks, such as cribbage boards, toothpick holders, gavels, and fancy handles for canes. The carvers had rarely seen the things they were asked to copy or make, but they carried out their orders with an assurance usually associated only with a long apprenticeship.

Engraved walrus ivory, 19th century, the tusk at top from northerrn Alaska, the pipe, 13¾" long, from Port Clarence.





Ivory bear carved by Aloysius Pikonganna (a King Islander) in Nome in 1955, c. 5" long.

Few carvers, however, could approach the virtuosity of a man called Happy Jack (or Angokwazhuk, his Eskimo name), a Little Diomede Islander who began his extraordinary career aboard a San Francisco whaling ship before the gold rush. I have wondered what he might have done with training in design and sculpture, and acquaintance with the world's great art, for he had uncanny dexterity, and a fine sense of balance and form in his few original pieces. He had little opportunity to demonstrate his creativity, though, with a hungry family clamouring for food on the one hand and, on the other, customers for his copying virtuosity of the mining camp art of the day: advertisements and illustrations from Victorian magazines, wrappers from talcum powder or tar soap, and photographs of relatives or public figures like Theodore Roosevelt.

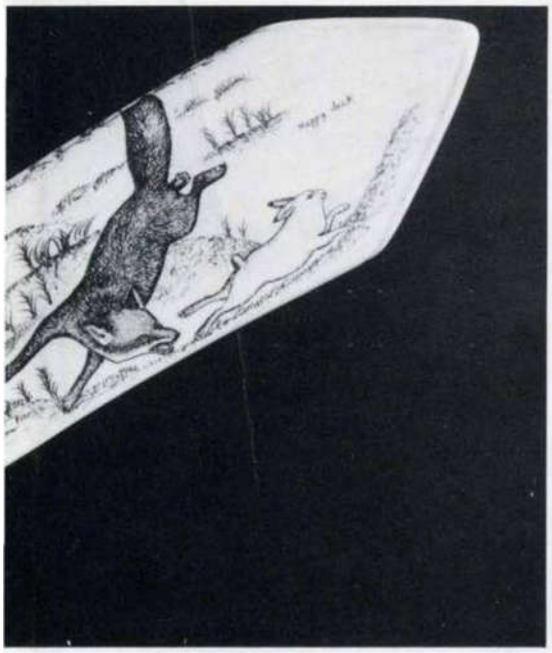
But, that is what all carvers faced, the market and their own self preservation. Those Eskimos whose lives were altered by a changing economy were unable to compete for the same job with dozens of experienced men, so they fell back on activities they knew best, hunting and carving. Thus, it was only natural that to keep body and soul together they should heed the wishes and warnings of the market. Unfortunately, their originality and inventiveness were often curbed from the start by the narrow demands of the traders who were interested in marketability and not merit, and whose ideas for salable objects were aesthetically at rock bottom. The Eskimos were sometimes further bound to storekeepers by a lopsided barter system. The mark-ups of both fur and ivory products were unbelievably high, four and five hundred per cent on the basis of carved ivory retail price and grocery wholesale cost, but the Eskimos often had no other choice but to deal on such a basis.

Despite the many silly things requested of them, and the niggardly return for their labours, the carvers have been able to produce enough objects of real worth over the years to show that their remarkable talents were not entirely stifled. The creativity of the Eskimo artist and craftsman is now greater than ever, and shows promise of surpassing both the graphic and sculptural art of earlier days.

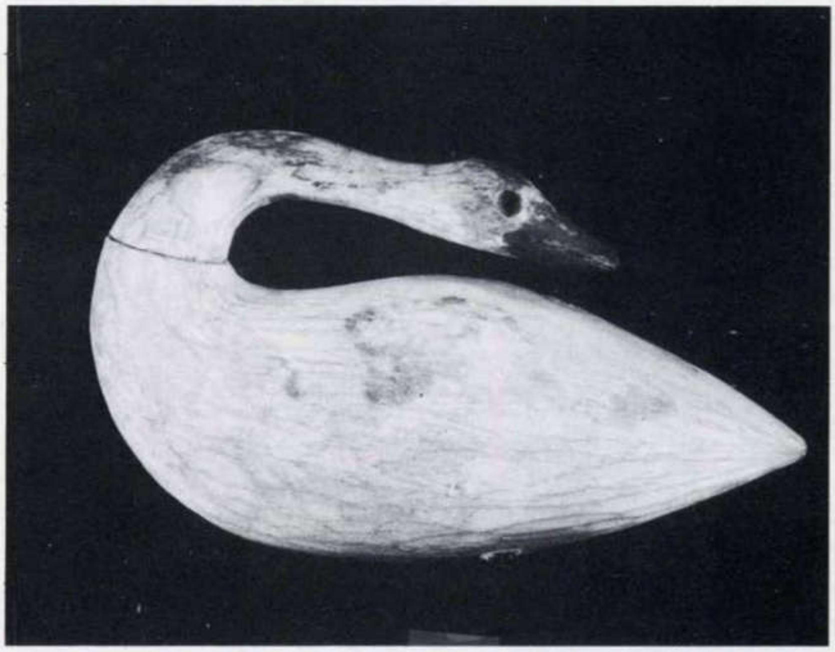
What is Alaskan Eskimo art of today? It is a vast array of objects in every media developed during a half century of intensive production originating from both carvers' and noncarvers' ideas; it is a combination of the very good and the poor in design and form; and it is a pursuit always tempered by tradition and conservatism, but constantly open to change, as in the exciting new developments.

Nome and the Bering Strait remain the centre of ivory carving and of arts activity in general, although villages both north and south are contributing to the total crafts. The Indian Arts and Crafts Board of the United States Department of the Interior estimates that almost eighty per cent of Eskimo craftsmen, both men and women, live in northwest Alaska, mainly in the Bering Strait region including St Lawrence Island.

Until recently Eskimo arts had drifted more or less with a conglomerate stream of many separate ideas gradually acquired over the years. The early emphasis on two-dimensional engraving gradually lessened as ivory



Ivory engraving by Happy Jack, early 20th century.



Wood carving made in the 1890s at St. Michael, 2½" from belly to head.

became scarce and attempts were made to conserve it by designing smaller objects, many of which are still made today. One of the first departures from the early knick-knacks and engraved copywork was the sculpture of animal, bird, and human figures in ivory during the 1920s, and further developed in the thirties. People of Thule and late prehistoric periods had carved numerous wood, bone, and ivory figurines, but those of the nineteenth century apparently were reluctant to carve forms that were still integrated with their own beliefs. That does not mean, however, that figure carvings were not produced to some extent in early historical times. Before the turn of the century, attempts were made in various isolated areas to produce such things, but in each case, the bottom fell out of the market before a trend could develop. Examples were the small carvings made from flint and imported Canadian soapstone lamps, collected by John Murdoch at Point Barrow in the 1880s; ivory figurines carved for traders in the Bristol Bay area; and driftwood bird and human figures made in the 1890s at St Michael.

In the 1920s with a huge market to fall back on, several persons interested in Eskimo sculpture provided carvers with photographs and instructions for carving, and followed up by purchasing the best pieces at subsequent intervals. These figurines gradually developed into one of the major phases of contemporary ivory carving, and from it has stemmed such staples as "bird sets," a collection of seven or eight exquisitely carved birds, principally from St Lawrence Island, sometimes from King Island. At about the same time, wood carving of human figures was done by Numayuk, a St Lawrence Island man, but this medium again failed to develop into anything of importance.

I have been puzzled by the failure of wood carving to become a major art expression, both north and south, although recent developments may reverse the trend. Driftwood was abundant on many northern beaches, and was used aboriginally in great quantities everywhere for masks, dishes, houses, sleds, and utensils, but apparently both carver and customer preferences have contributed to the greater popularity of ivory. The carver's traditional use of ivory stems from a cultural bias for it as well as greater monetary returns for the time spent. The customer often thinks that the ivory looks more "Eskimo" than does wood, but he does not have a chance to see how "Eskimo" wood can look, for there are few wood carvings for sale and, except for a few painted dishes and small boxes of southwest Alaska, they have been little publicized.

Other items were added to the crafts repertory during the 1920s. At Point Barrow, small covered baskets of baleen (whalebone from the mouth of the right whale or the bowhead whale) were developed by men in a twining technique, and topped off by a carved ivory figurine. The idea later spread to Point Hope and Wainwright. Though expensive, these baskets are eagerly sought by collectors, and are so popular that the Office of Economic Opportunity has approved a training program for basket makers of Point Hope.

During the same period of the twenties, the Lomen Reindeer Corporation imported large quantities of ivory tusks for carving on Nunivak Island. A new idea evolved of carving out whole tusks in a bas-relief of interrelated animals, whose complex relationship necessitated a great degree of distortion. This form was somewhat unusual to Eskimo art, although nineteenth century tusks or ivory pipes often had separated bas-relief figures carved in conjunction with graphic engravings. The idea for the Nunivak tusks was supposedly invented by one man, who taught others, but they are rarely carved now.

More new items appeared on the market in the 1930s and the 1940s. On St Lawrence Island, thin slices of ivory were fashioned into geometric shapes for fragile necklaces and all over Bering Strait a brisk business in bracelet making developed when carvers put together pieces of ivory on rubberized thread. All are made today, and variations in bracelets are virtually endless in many geometric shapes, graphic scenes, and small sculptured figurines.

Skin sewing and basketry, the women's arts, enjoyed variable degrees of success. Women of the Aleutian Islands and the Bering Strait were particularly adept in the ornamentation of fur clothing; and those all along the coast, but especially south of Norton Sound, in well designed basketry. The Aleuts have not kept pace with skin work as have the women of Bering Strait, where sewing is still flourishing, and they have discontinued making their exquisite baskets, probably the most delicately woven of all in the world. Baskets, however, are made in a limited quantity in a few villages such as Stebbins, Hooper Bay, and Mekoryuk, Nunivak Island.

Parallel with this huge anonymous reservoir of arts and crafts that had built up over a half century was a development of individual endeavour by men who had pulled away physically, but not spiritually, to a different environment and manner of expression. These persons began working as artists and craftsmen away from home twenty or thirty years ago, and have become partially, if not wholly, self-sufficient in their chosen careers. One of these men, Howard Rock from Point Hope, and now editor of the native newspaper, *Tundra Times*, had formal training in painting and sculpture in the 1930s at the University of Washington, fulfilling a desire for art study inspired by a teacher at a native boarding school.

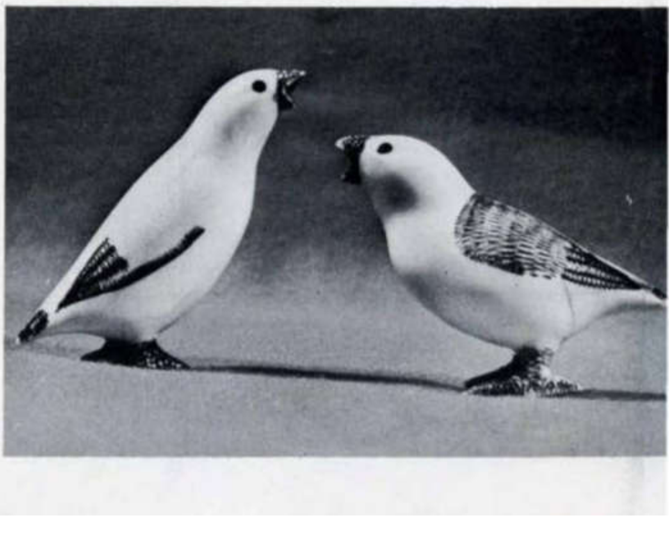
Another, George Ahgupuk of Shishmaref, sold his first sketches while hospitalized with tuberculosis in 1934, and has gone on to immortalize scenes from Eskimo life and mythology on sealskin parchment. Ahgupuk has produced a tremendous number of paintings and drawings, and at times has been guilty of copying his own copies, yet when called upon to make special graphic interpretations, his results are equal to the current "primitives" by non-Eskimo artists.

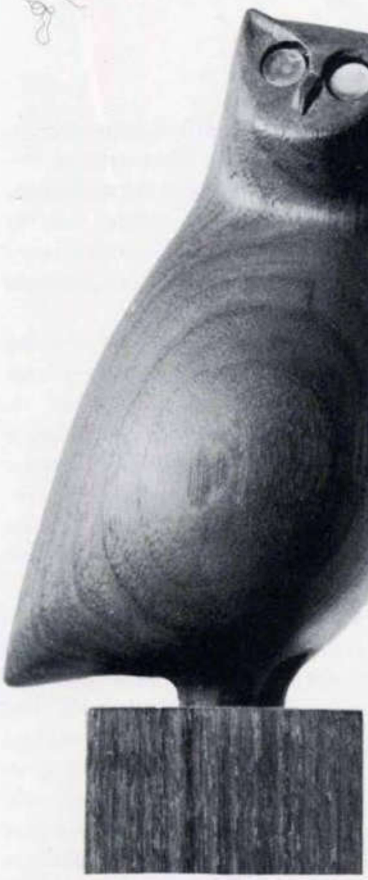
The Eskimo as individual artist, as opposed to producer of anonymous products that formed the market's backbone until recently, was not entirely new. During the gold rush, skilful and well-known carvers like Happy Jack, or John Octuck of Teller, or Guy Kakarook of St Michael often signed their names to engravings on large ivory tusks. Kakarook and others also signed their full names to watercolours and sketches on paper to be sold to teachers and traders.

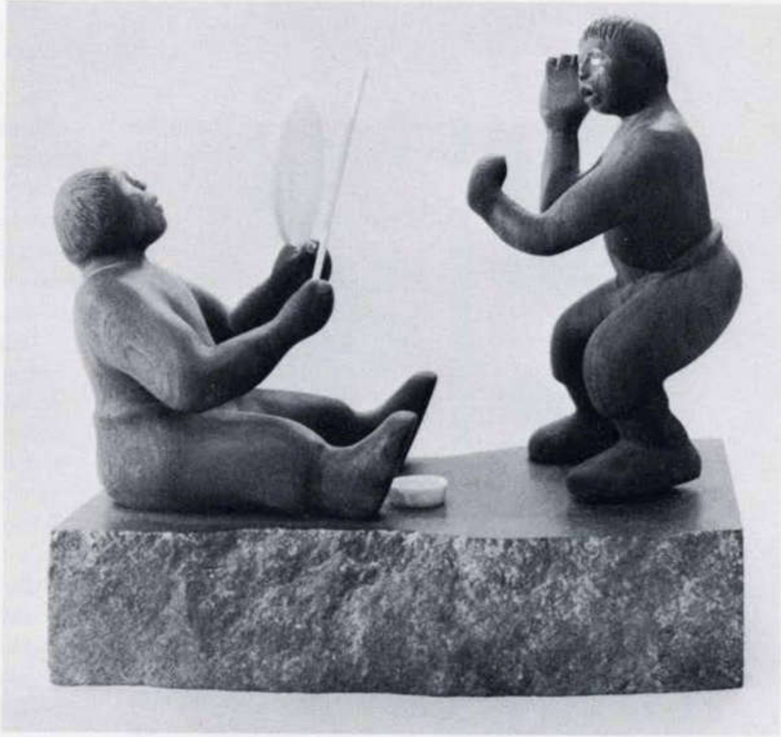
Not until the early 1930s was any formal attention paid to this huge complex of products as art. At that time, the Bureau of Indian Affairs sent an arts and crafts specialist to Alaska to cover the entire State (then a Territory), including both Indians and Eskimos, but in 1947 this duty was taken over by a crafts specialist of the United States Indian Arts and Crafts Board. This Board, established in 1935, was an agency of the Department of the Interior and had no connection with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The two agencies often worked together, however, and one of their first co-operative ventures was to establish better retail and wholesale outlets for native crafts. At that time, assistance in selling was considered to be more vital than changing styles, products, or subject matter, because of marketing handicaps in remote areas, as well as a growing threat of spurious Eskimo and Indian crafts being sold in Alaskan curio shops.

Therefore in 1937 the Alaskan branch of the Bureau of Indian Affairs organized a department of arts and crafts with advice and financial assistance of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board and established a retail clearing house. In 1956 the clearing house became the Alaska Native Arts and Crafts Association, Inc. (ANAC) which in 1961 opened a retail shop in Juneau where merchandise was received from teachers, village council members, and native co-operative stores all over Alaska for redistribution to dealers and individual purchasers. In effect, the clearing house served the same purpose as the early

Pair of snow buntings made by a King Islander, 1955.







Carvings in walnut, the owl with agate eyes by Ted Pullock, King Island, is on a deeper base than shown, total height 12¼ inches. Dancer and drummer by John Tingook, Point Hope, 1955, adds ivory, and stone base.

traders, for it suggested to the craftsmen what would sell best, how many pieces of a certain item should be made and, in some cases, what particular form, design, or finish of the object would be most acceptable. An emphasis on traditional design, particularly in conjunction with utilitarian objects, was retained.

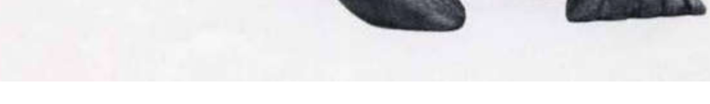
This preoccupation with marketing was entirely defensible in view of the problems facing federal and local officials in creating economic independence for the native peoples. Often the small amounts of cash that were paid the different craftsmen enabled them to buy a few necessities brought about by changes not of their own making. Furthermore, at that time, very few Eskimos had acquired the necessary education or experience for competition in jobs (comparable to the gold rush of a half century before) and sometimes a village just did not have any jobs at all.

The clearing house, however, advised schoolteachers and native store managers of definite trends they should encourage in their teaching or trading. A teacher's participation in crafts programs was not novel, although earlier classes had been arbitrary decisions reflecting individual interests and capabilities after schools were established by the Bureau of Education north of Norton Sound in the 1890s. Their reports are full of glowing praise for the talents of their little charges.

After 1931 when the native schools were taken over by the Bureau of Indian Affairs from the Bureau of Education (the non-native schools in towns having been placed under the auspices of the Territory), formal attention was given to arts programs, and teachers were expected to include progress in handicrafts in their annual reports. Several schools, particularly the large Bureau of Indian Affairs school in Nome, had scheduled classes in ivory carving and skin sewing.

Lack of finances has hampered the work of both the Indian Arts and Crafts Board and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. However, with the turnover and addition of specialists in the 1950s, several projects were begun introducing new materials and products. Since that time an arts and crafts specialist has travelled to various crafts-producing villages, suggesting new designs, products, and improved marketing techniques. However, it was a physi-

Seal, walnut with inlaid baleen eyes, by Peter Seeganna, King Island, 4⅛" high.



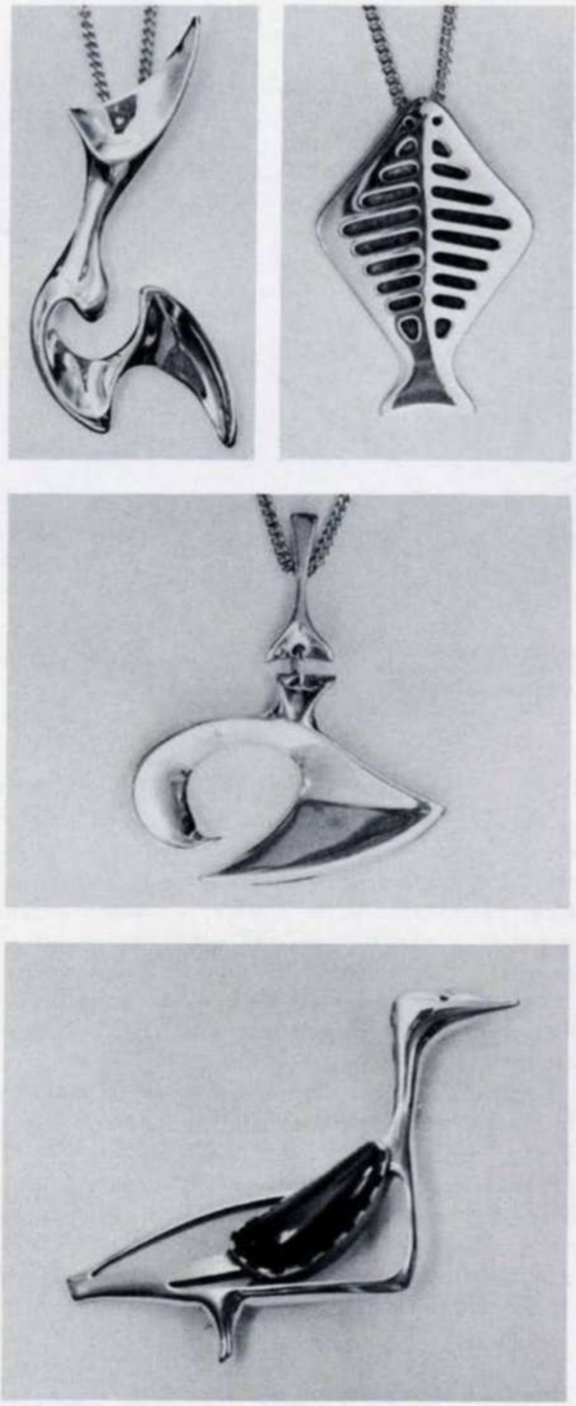
cal and financial impossibility in such a large area to make annual visits to even a small percentage of the thirty or more villages involved, and after the specialist's necessarily brief stay, some of the craftsmen, particularly those outside the tradition of the northern ivory carving industry, were unable to carry out suggestions without supervision.

One of the first projects inaugurated was a jade cutting business at Shungnak on the Kobuk River where large deposits of nephrite are located most, however, on claimed or patented land of non-natives. Although a prehistoric jade working industry has been found in nearby sites, jade actually had been little used by Eskimos. When I visited the project's neat log workshop with its power tools and diamond saw in 1961, no work was underway, and the project has now been abandoned.

The most successful venture, still operating today, is a caribou hoof jewelry project begun in 1956 at Kivalina, a seaside village between Point Hope and Kotzebue Sound. Kivalina, with a population of less than 150, had never participated to any extent in the ivory carving and skin sewing production of the early years. The main income was from reindeer herds, which brought in subsistence level cash, but it was from this occupation that one of the arts and crafts specialists saw the possibilities of making jewelry from caribou or reindeer hoof, which in treated form looks like tortoise-shell. The hoofs are boiled until soft, flattened and cured for two weeks, scraped, and then carved and polished. Various shapes—seals, whales, fish, and miniature copies of masks and ulus (the semi-circular woman's knife)—are made into pendants, tie clasps, cuff links, earrings, and charms.

Arts and crafts have been a vital part of twentieth-century native economy although some critics favour its complete replacement by more "essential" occupations such as heavy equipment operation or bookkeeping. Certainly the total income from native crafts is small in the state-wide total, but it looms large in the Eskimos' own total from the other end of the telescope. Handicrafts undoubtedly will be of importance for some time to come because many people are still living in small coastal and river villages where hunting and fishing are good, but where they have little chance to earn money by other means. Today, only hard cash, provided only by handicrafts, can buy many needed things.

By the early 1960s, however, the market for both ivory and fur products had slumped considerably, and individual returns had gone down. Part of its decline could be attributed to the closing of army installations, always a strong market, part to the nature of Eskimo arts and crafts themselves. One of the considered weaknesses of the contemporary Alaskan production—its almost mass-

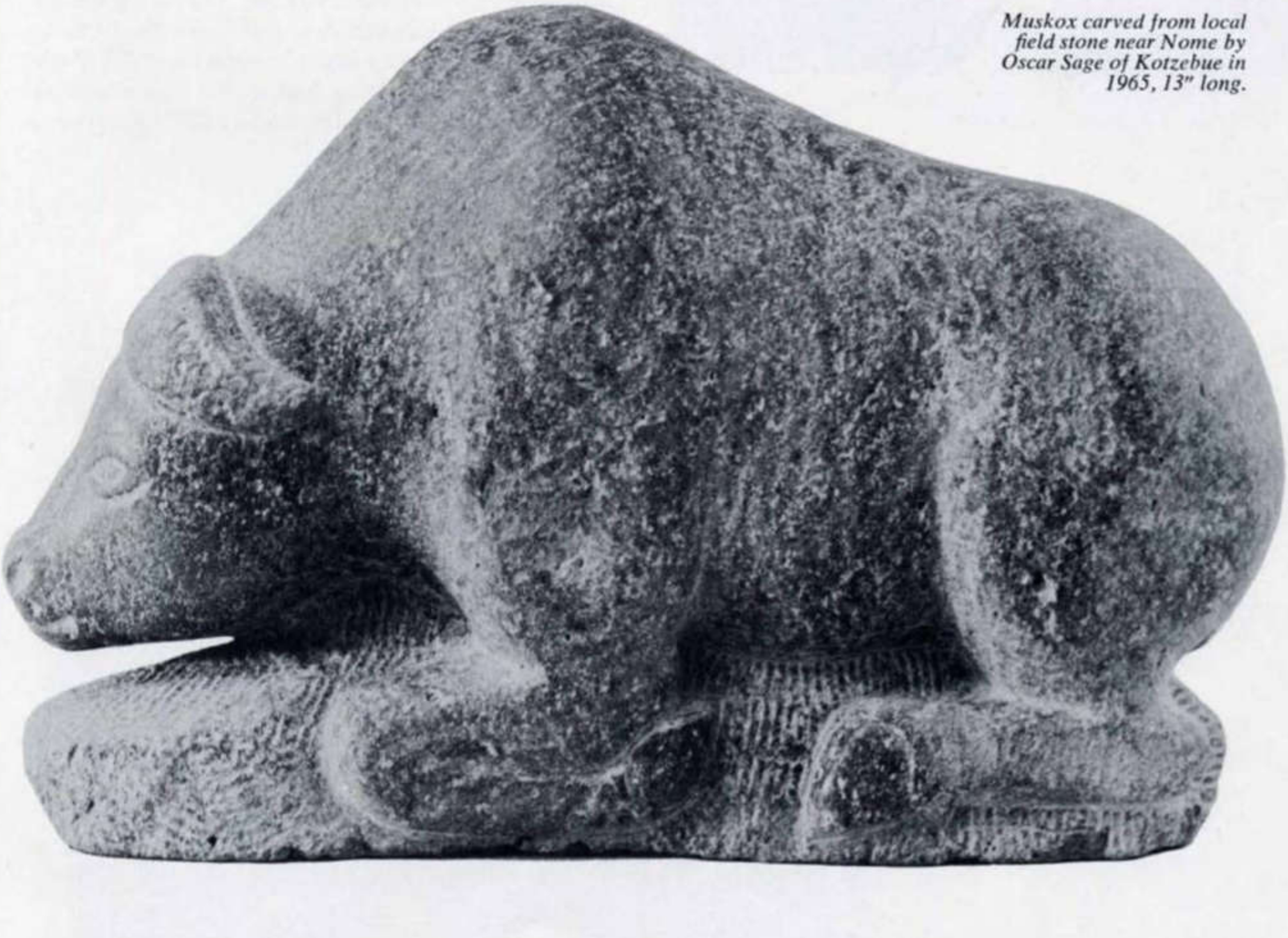


Silver jewelry: the fish and the pendant in cast silver, at top, were both made by Harry Norton of Kivalina. The pendant in the centre is by John Penatac of King Island. The bird brooch is set with jade and was made by Alvin Kayouktuk of Little Diomede Island. All 1965.

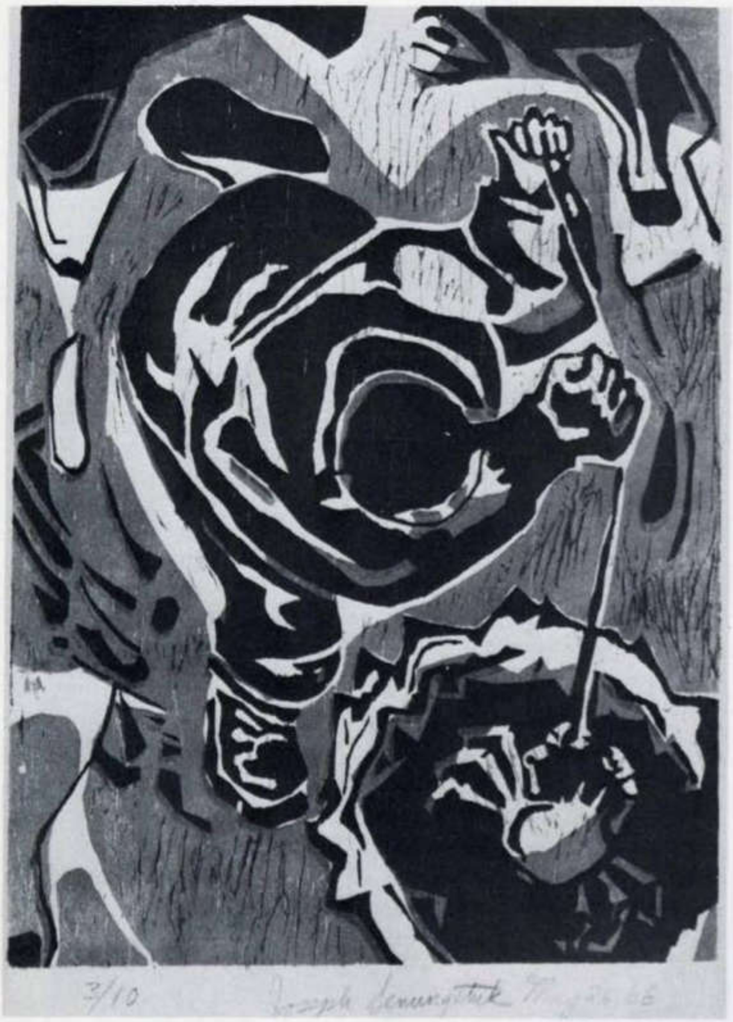
produced output and great variety—actually was one of its strengths in the past, which kept it going through adverse conditions. But times change, and even the tourists, who often continue to choose their souvenirs with a penurious eye, have also been picking out those with the best design and form. It was time to take stock of the Eskimo arts.

The Indian Arts and Crafts Board made plans for an entirely new outlook in the Eskimo arts, breaking away to some extent from the narrow souvenir market, yet permitting the craftsmen to remain within the bounds of ethnic subject matter and form. This was to be done through introducing new materials, concepts of design, and up-to-date production methods. Above all, training was to be carried out in a centre that would bring students to the teacher, and not *vice versa*, and though production ultimately would continue on the village level, the new training would broaden its scope. Thus, the organization of such a program was to be on a state-wide basis, not only administratively, but practically, with participants planning and sharing their goals through the combination of formal training and production workshops, reflecting the general approach to the whole of Indian arts throughout the United States.

In August 1963 the first pilot workshop to test the feasibility of such a program was inaugurated in Nome under the direction of George Rogers, economist, and Danny Pierce, an art instructor at the University of Alaska. Half of the teaching was done by Ronald Senungetuk, a young Eskimo man from Wales, Alaska, who had had extensive formal art training at the School for American Craftsmen, Rochester, New York, as well as in Norway under a Fulbright Scholarship. His interest in an art career had been stimulated at Mt Edgecumbe High School in Sitka by George W. Fedoroff, now regional supervisor in Alaska for the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, and the man directly responsible for implementation of the current program.



Muskox carved from local field stone near Nome by Oscar Sage of Kotzebue in 1965, 13" long.

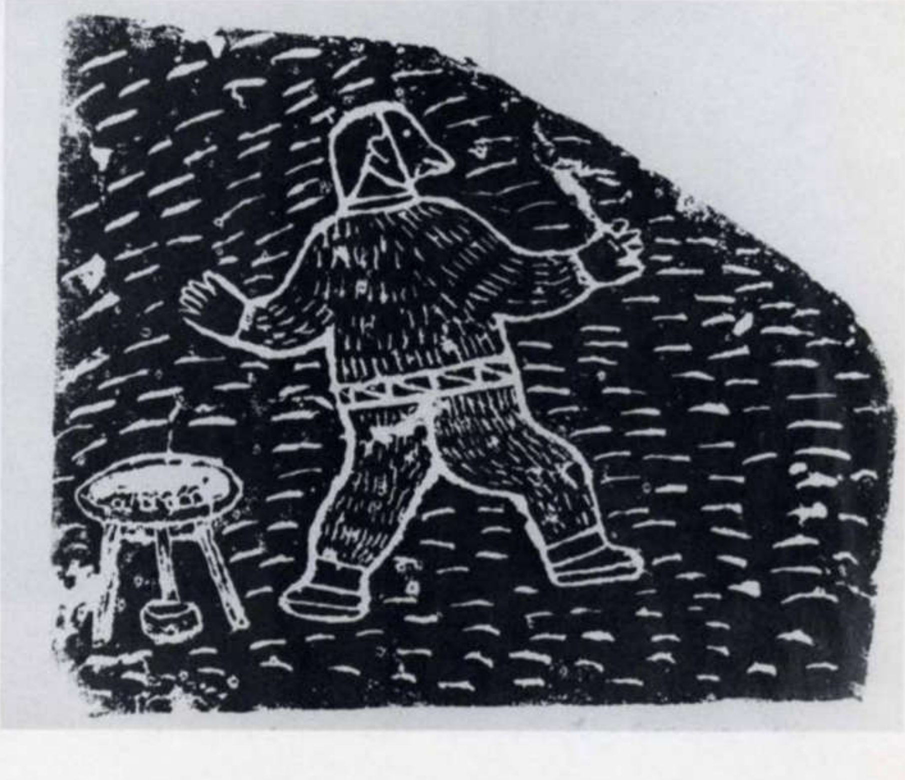


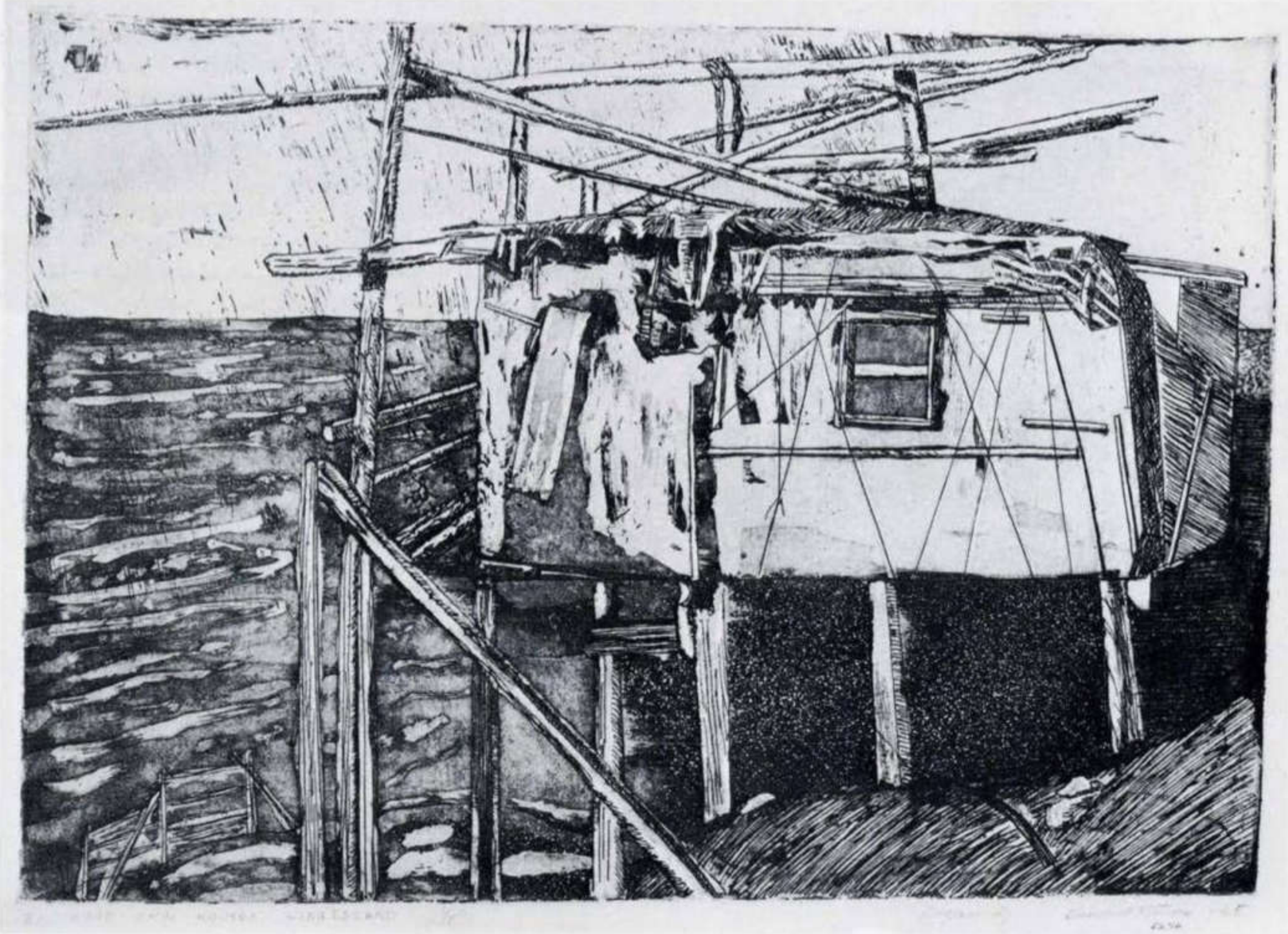
The experiment was not only confined to the workshop, open to both Eskimos and non-Eskimos, but also included working with native craftsmen outside of classroom hours and searching for items in the Eskimo household that could be adapted to a streamlined crafts program. It was discovered from this workshop that the Eskimo carvers had little understanding of design, a prerequisite for really creative work, and that the formal aspects of study might be best presented through a combination of theoretical training with practical workshops. One of the workshop members, Bernard T. Katexac, a King Islander, then forty years old, was the first Eskimo to be given a Bureau of Indian Affairs scholarship in art for further training at the University of Alaska. He subsequently spent two years learning printmaking, drawing, sculpturing, and metal working, and after a year in Nome, returned to the University for added study in his specialty, woodblock prints.

Upon completion of the pilot program, the Designer-Craftsman Training Project was organized as the first class in a regional economic development program made possible by a federal grant under the Manpower Development and Training Act. The project was operated from 28 September 1964 to 30 June 1965 by the Alaska Department for Vocational Education. The curriculum was organized by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board in co-operation with the University of Alaska and the Alaska Department of Education, and studies were supervised by Ronald Senungetuk. The entire MDTA program in

Above: "Crab fishing through ice", woodcut in colour by Joseph Senungetuk (brother of Ronald Senungetuk) of Wales, 1966.

Right: "Masked dancer", stonecut print by Louis Seeganna, 1965.

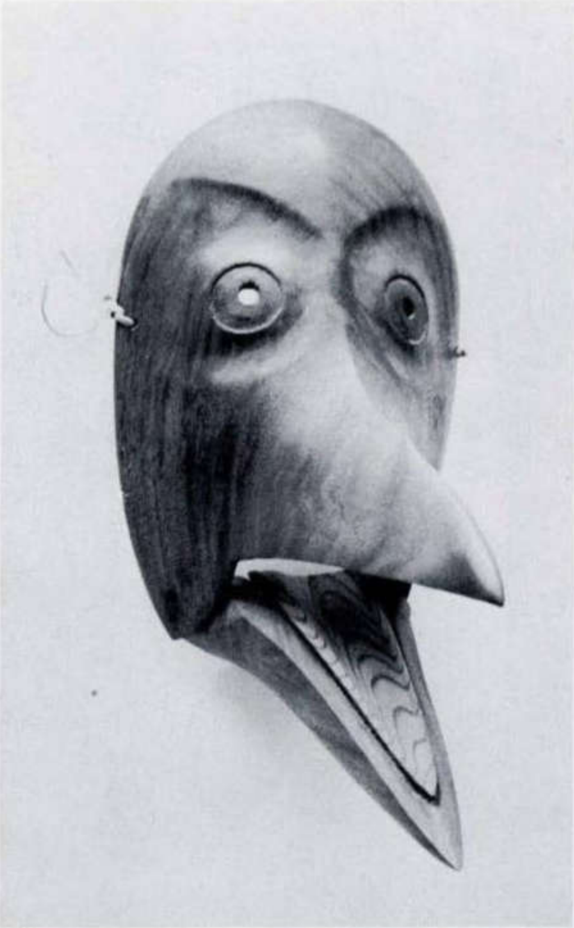




"Wood - Skin Houses, King Island", by Bernard Katexac, King Island, 1965, etching and aquatint.

Alaska, which was aimed at making native peoples employable, was planned to include at least 1,200 persons in more than thirty occupations, but when funds were drastically cut in 1966, many of the courses were suspended or postponed. The initial project, however, with thirty-two trainees, including one woman, finished its course with exceptional success. All were craftsmen with varying degrees of experience, ranging in age from sixteen to sixty-five. The course was widely advertised, and as might have been predicted from the history of both ancient and recent Eskimo art, more than half who volunteered and who were accepted came from King Island and St Lawrence Island, two of Alaska's largest craft producers. None of the trainees lived north of Point Hope, and only two came from south of Norton Sound, but they were unable to complete their work. Two of the eleven King Islanders were old hands at carving: Aloysius Pikonganna, who had been making fine ivory sculpture for years, and Tony Pushruk, who is the island's principal maskmaker.

All of the students were required to take classes in basic drawing and drafting, and two of three workshops: sculpture, metalworking and lapidary, or printmaking. The aim was to improve the output for the contemporary market through improved technical skills, including better tools, variety of materials, and awareness of a



Raven mask of walnut with inlaid California redwood tongue, by Tony Pushruk of King Island, 1965.

conceptual approach to traditional design. The new techniques of printmaking (both stone and wood) greatly expanded the possibilities of ivory engravings and drawings or paintings on sealskin or paper, and some of the most exciting work came from this field. The silverwork, also, was a surprising success, the opposite to the ill-fated experiment in the 1940s when several Eskimo men were taken to William Spratling's workshop in Taxco, Mexico, to learn silversmithing.

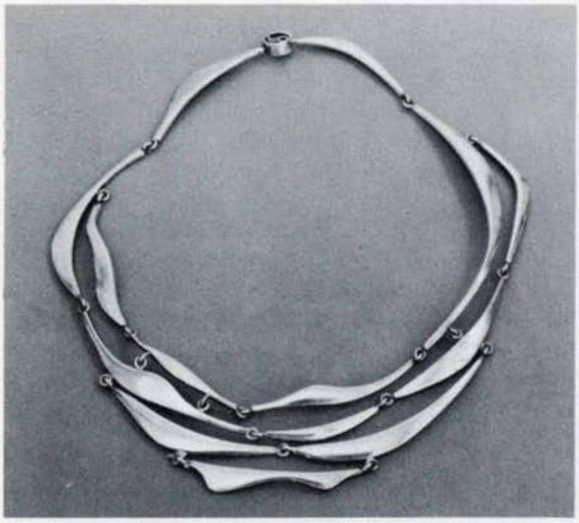
The MDTA program participants returned to their home villages where they are continuing to work in the various media, often in their spare time away from the ordinary Eskimo activities such as hunting. Plans were made for a second arts and crafts class in Nome so that a larger number of trained persons from the same village could form local workshops for study and marketing, and therein reinforce the enthusiasm of their initial training and strengthen the quality of their work with an exchange of ideas. This did not materialize because courses in airport maintenance, surveying, and small engine repair were considered to be of greater immediate concern; and then all courses temporarily stopped. Nevertheless, a combined workshop and sales outlet was established in 1966 in King Island Village to house the Arctic Eskimo Arts and Crafts Association that had been organized the previous winter. Similar associations were formed in Savoonga and in Gambell on St Lawrence Island and at Wales on Seward Peninsula north of Nome. The Arts and Crafts Board supplied the Nome association with funds for a building and equipment as well as for operating expenses. It will also provide technical assistance as needed. The membership is open to all Eskimo craftsmen, although it is currently composed mainly of King Islanders.

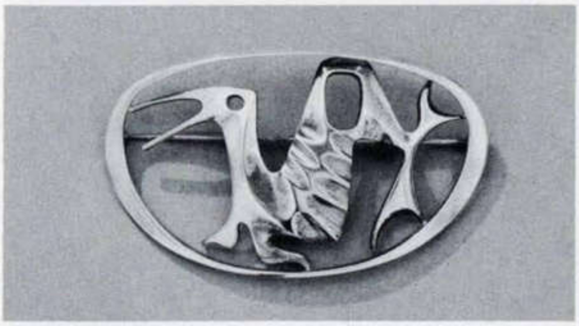
From this organization are coming prints, sculpture, and jewelry, yet ivory carving will continue, and one of the great traditions of the North will not be lost. Already some of these persons have been recognized for their efforts, with several art galleries exhibiting their work. At the time of this writing a number of prints and pieces of silver jewelry were shown at a month-long show of contemporary American Indian arts at the Collectors Gallery, a dealer's gallery in Bellevue, Washington.

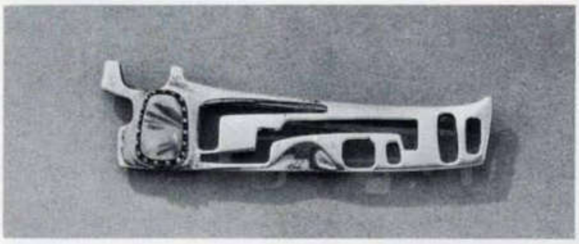
Some of the die-hard exponents of the purely ethnic arts will be disturbed by this new trend in the contemporary scene, but we need ask only one question: How many successful sculptors and painters of our day produce great art without knowledge of the basic principles of art? The implicit answer is reflected in the positive attitude now taken for all Indian and Eskimo art of the State. In Sitka, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board gives special direction in the application of design and techniques to selected Indian and Eskimo craftsmen, and, in co-operation with the University of Alaska, at College, now provides young craftsmen, regardless of their academic schooling, with formal training in the Extension Center for Arts and Crafts.

Eskimo boys and girls of high school age are also taking advantage of training offered by the Institute of American Indian Arts, established in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1961. Eighteen native Alaskans were enrolled in the first class of this school, which is open to all American Indians, and offers four years of academic studies and art specialties from grade ten to two postgraduate years.

The new developments in Eskimo art are only one of many changes in Alaska today. More than ever before, young Eskimo men and women are preparing themselves for a place in contemporary political, educational, and professional life of the State. They are tough-minded and







Ronald Senungetuk, formerly of Wales, now assistant professor of design at the University of Alaska, with some of his silverwork and, left, silver necklace and brooches made by Ronald Senungetuk in 1962.

see themselves, not as a quaint people using a bow drill in a dusty corner, but as dynamic voices of a great and vigorous country. A solution for the development of arts and crafts, both in the economic frontier and the aesthetic realm, is no simple one. There are young men like Ronald Senungetuk who can take their places as artists of the world without reference to their ethnic origin or dependence on any other aspect of their work but its intrinsic merit; yet there are equally gifted men, who, for one reason or other, will be unable to follow such a professional path. They will be an important part of the continuing world of Eskimo art, not only satisfying a needed economic requirement, but an aesthetic one, using materials and techniques most suitable and appropriate for fulfilling their preoccupation with creativeness, as their culture has done for two thousand years.

◆

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. Nordenskiold, A.E., *The Voyage of the Vega round Asia and Europe.* New York, 1882, page 579.

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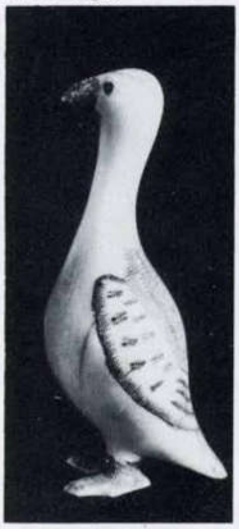
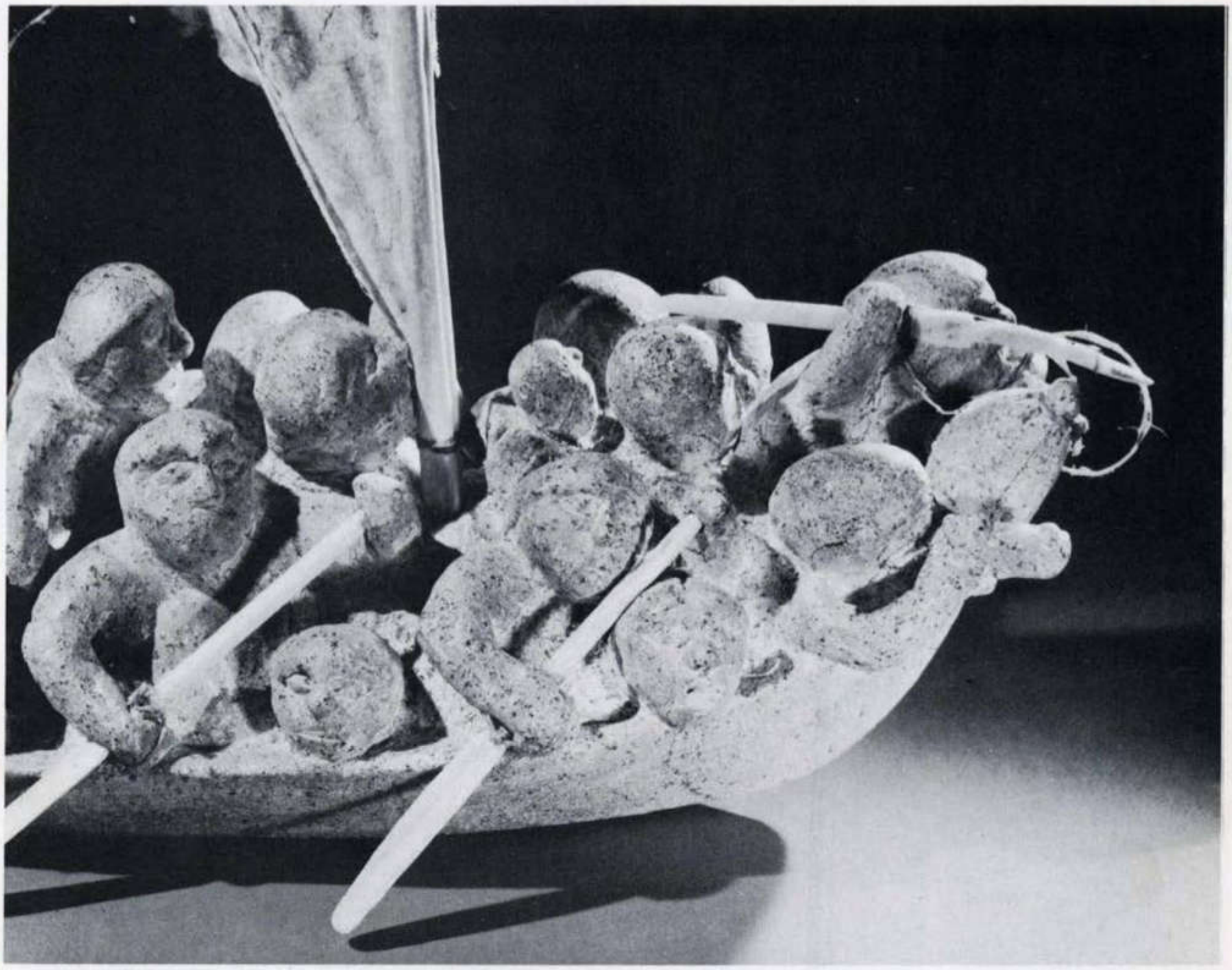
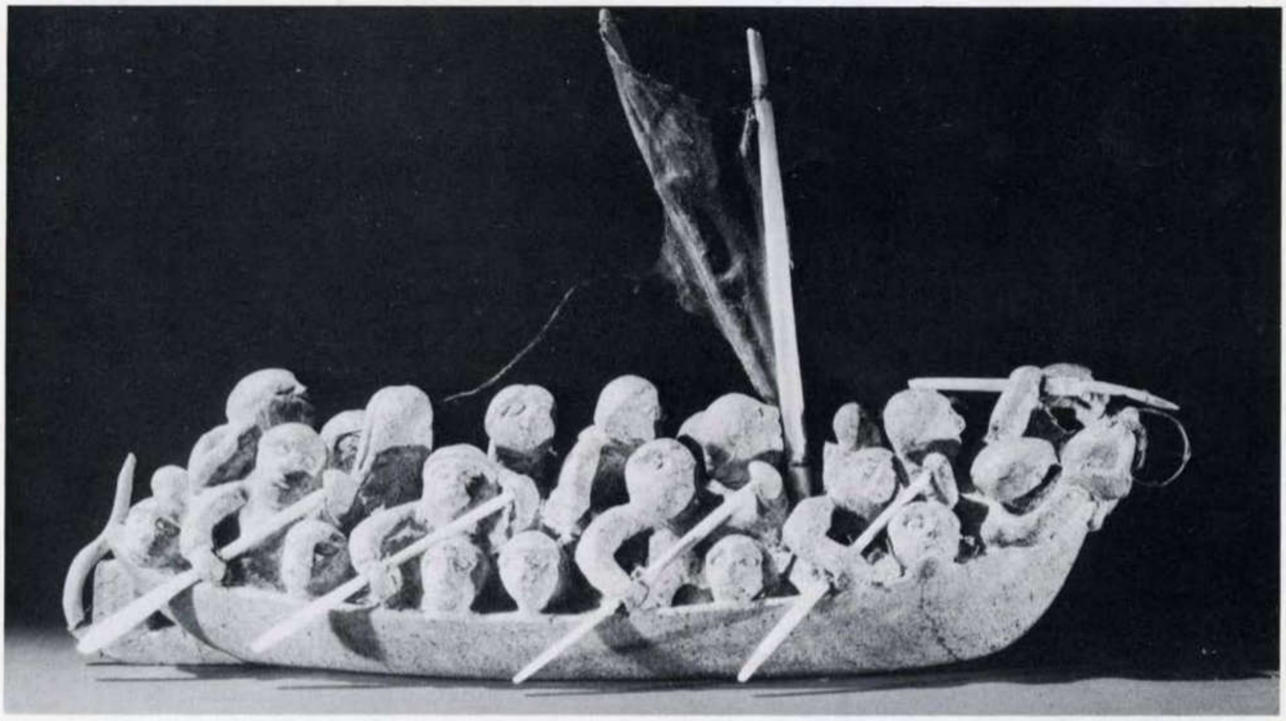
Photographs: Jim Bedford, University of Alaska, 91 (Senungetuk); Alfred A. Blaker, 80, 82-3, 83; Indian Arts and Crafts Board, Washington, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91 (jewelry); Dorothy Jean Ray, 81, 82, 84, 91 (bird).

Eider duck in ivory with graphite markings, King Island, 1950, c.2¼" high.

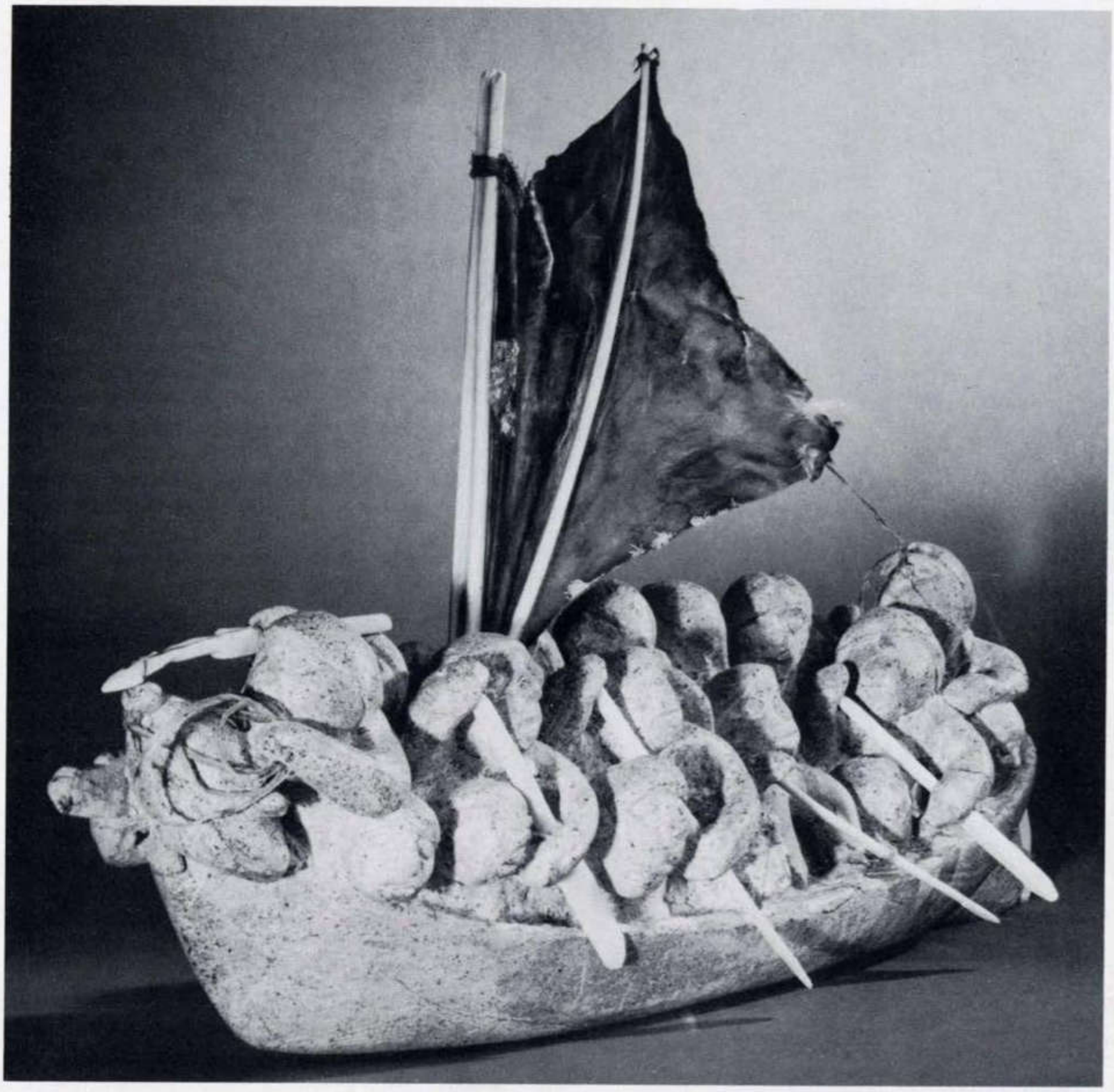






Boat about 12 inches long.

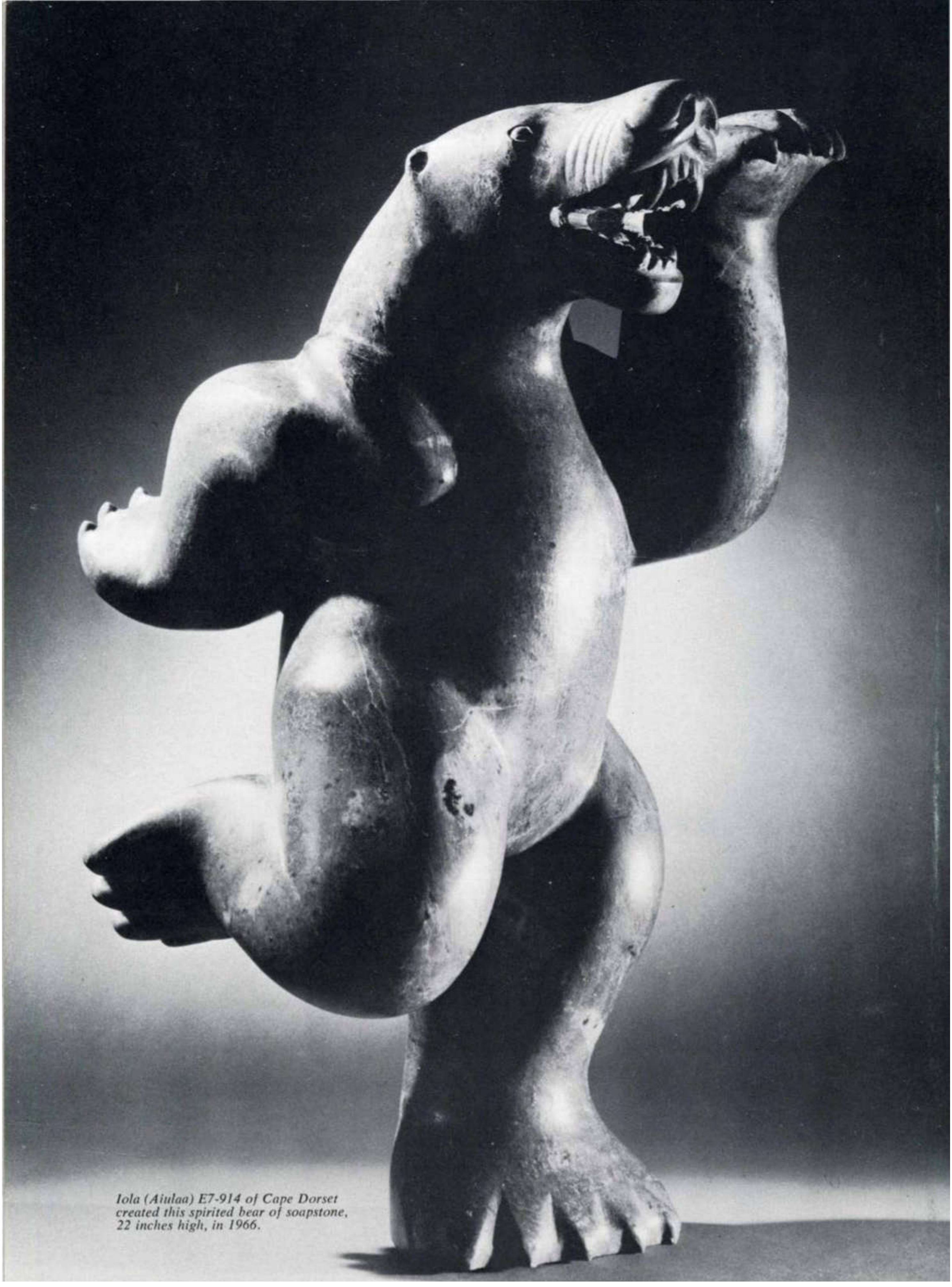
CAMPBELL & CHIPMAN PHOTOS



THE MIGRATION

When, in 1965, Joe Talirunilik (E9-818) made this soapstone carving, adding ivory paddles, harpoon and mast, and skin sail, he was recalling events in the life of his family. Joe and his wife are old age pensioners living in Povungnituk so the story he tells must have taken place in the 1890s for Joe made the journey as an infant carried on his mother's back—he shows her in the carvings, just in front of the mast.

At that time a group of Eskimos living on the mainland in the general area of Povungnituk decided to migrate in search of better hunting. Some forty men, women, and children, with their belongings, left the mainland before the fast shore ice broke up in the spring, taking their umiak over the ice by sled to open water. They wandered for more than two months and whenever they approached islands the harpooner or rifleman in the bow of the boat would shoot at random in order to dispel the spirits who lived there, before the people landed. At last they settled on Ottawa Islands on the east side of Hudson Bay where they stayed for several years. Eventually they returned to the mainland where they roamed from Richmond Gulf to Kogaluk River which became Joe's home. ◆



Iola (Aiulaa) E7-914 of Cape Dorset created this spirited bear of soapstone, 22 inches high, in 1966.

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF LITERATURE RELATIVE TO ESKIMO ART

ABBREVIATIONS

AINA—Arctic Institute of North America, Montreal and Washington, D.C.
AMNH—American Museum of Natural History, New York.
APUA—Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska, College.
BAE—Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C.
BE—Bureau of Ethnology (earlier designation of BAE), Washington, D.C.
Fifth Thule—Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition 1921-24, Copenhagen.
Meddel. Grøn.—Meddelelser om Grønland, Copenhagen.
NMC—National Museum of Canada, Ottawa.
Smithsonian—Report of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Tech. Paper No. 11—*Prehistoric Cultural Relations between the Arctic and Temperate Zones of North America*, ed. John M. Campbell. Technical Paper No. 11, Arctic Institute of North America, 1962.
U—University.
USNM—United States National Museum, Washington, D.C.

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MAP
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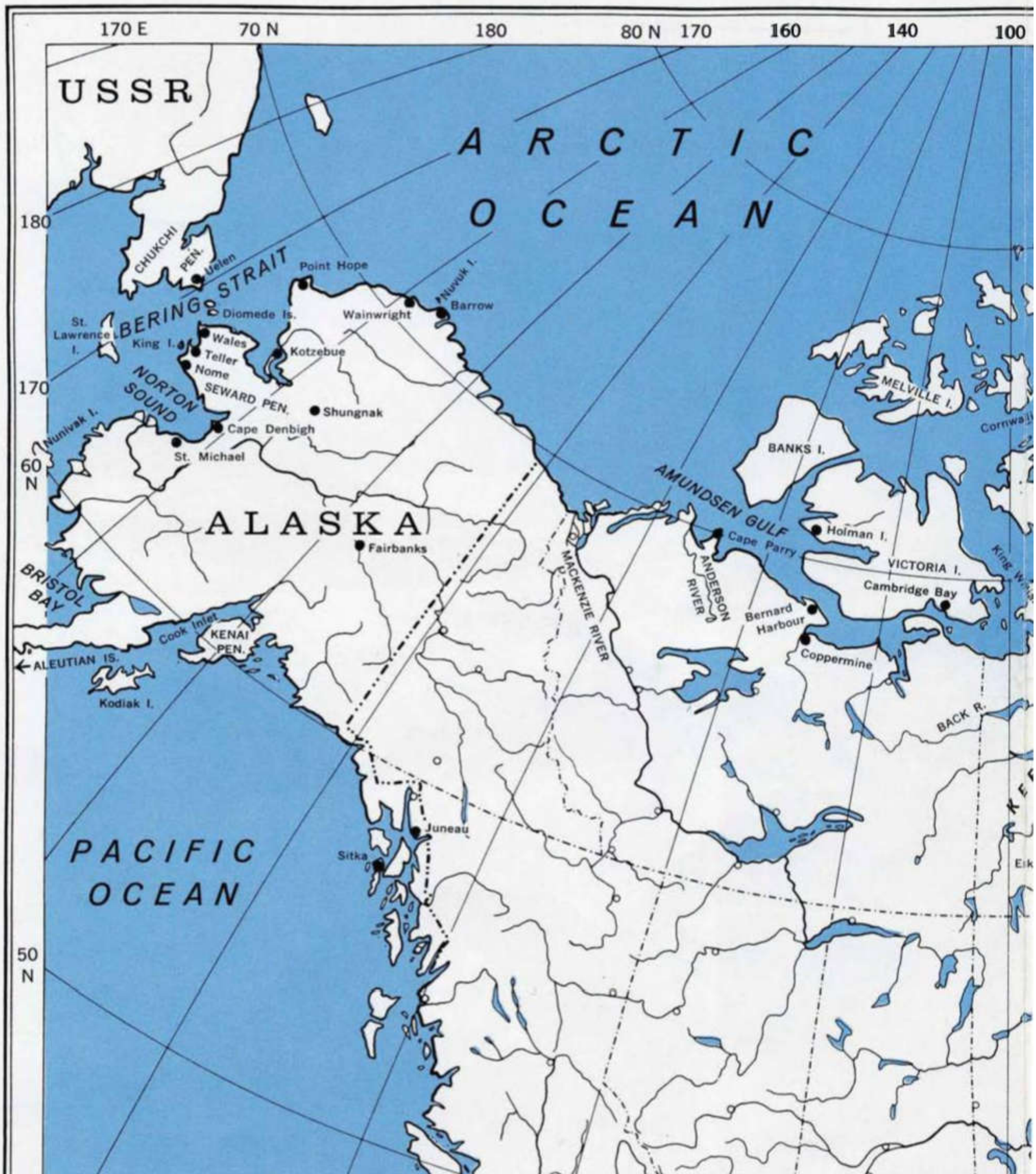
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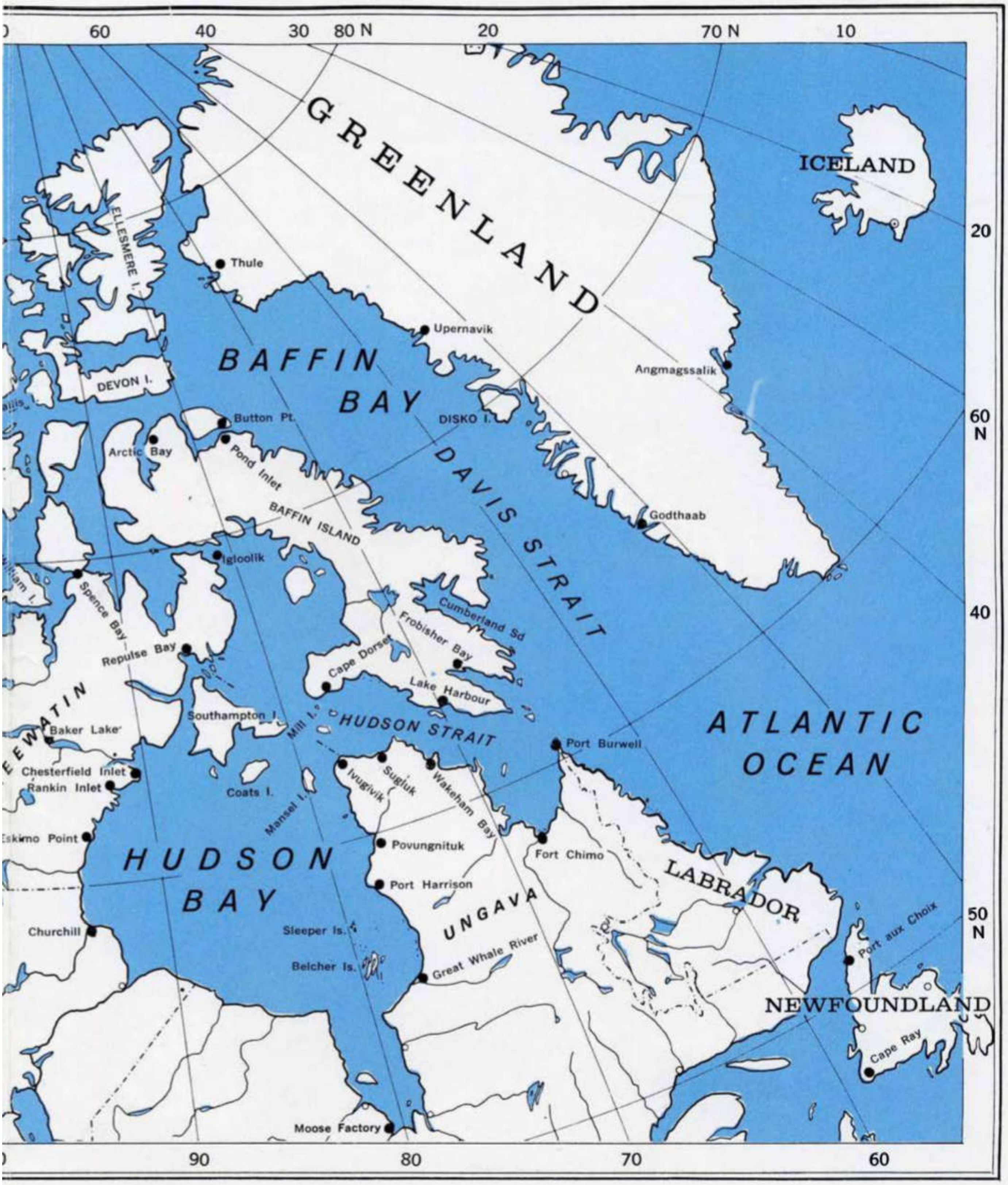
Northern Canada and adjacent lands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DAVIS STRAIT
Godthaab
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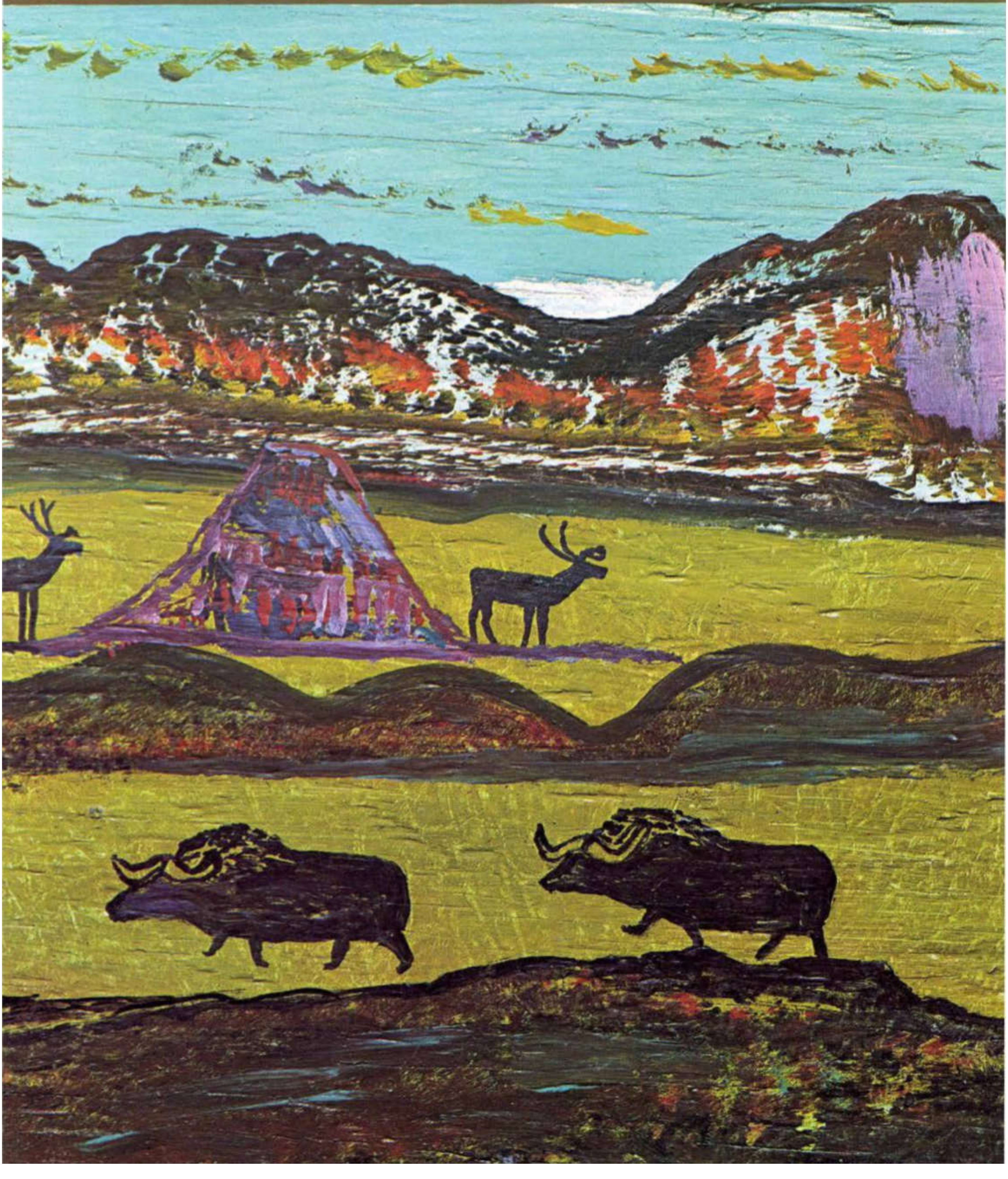
Frobisher Bay
Repulse Bay
Cape Dorset
Lake Harbour
EEWATIN
Baker Lake
Southampton I.
Mill I.
HUDSON STRAIT
Port Burwell
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Chesterfield Inlet
Rankin Inlet
Coats I.
Mansel I.
Ivugivik
Sugluk
Wakeham Bay
skimo Point
HUDSON BAY
Povungnituk
Fort Chimo
LABRADOR
Port Harrison
UNGAVA
Churchill
Sleeper Is.
Belcher Is.
Great Whale River
Port aux Choix
NEWFOUNDLAND
Cape Ray
Moose Factory

The original painting reproduced on this cover
was done on a piece of old plywood, 25¾ x 11¾ inches,
by Nauja ᓇᐅᔭ at Rankin Inlet in 1966.



Eskimo Art